

THE BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY & ART OF ANIMATION AND VFX

October
2015

ANIMATIONTM MAGAZINE



**Market Watch:
MIP Junior &
Cartoon Forum**

PLUS

.....
'Pickle and Peanut'
.....

.....
'Molang'
.....

.....
'Samurai Sharks'
.....

**VFX of 'The Man from
U.N.C.L.E.'**
.....

**Fall Festivals: WAC,
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Hotel Transylvania 2

**Sony makes accommodations for
cartoony graphics within cutting-edge CG**

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Sony Pictures Animation's **Hotel Transylvania 2** bites back Sept. 25

Mip Jr Cover: **Mirette Investigates**

from Cyber Group Studios

Cartoon Forum Cover: **Molang** from Millimages

Ottawa Cover: **Samurai Sharks** from Victory Arts



Wow. How is it possible that 2015 is on the way out and we are already heading into the home stretch of the fall shows? This issue will travel to Cartoon Forum, Ottawa International Animation Festival, MIP Junior and our events here in Los Angeles: The World Animation Celebration short film festival and the World Animation and VFX Summit.

As I write this note, I am on a plane returning from China. It was my 10th trip there, but my first visit to the Xiamen Animation Festival, which was a wonderful blend of animation, VFX professionals, and eager cosplay participants. The organizers from the Xiamen Software Park, along with ASIFA China's President, Mr. Johnchill Lee, have been encouraging and awarding animation from China and around the world at this event since 2008.

Next stop for me is the 4th edition of EI Festival in Cuernavaca, Mexico. This full program festival and marketplace includes master-classes, workshops, screenings, and endless networking opportunities. It has been acclaimed as the "most transcendental event in Latin America" thanks to the hard work of Jose Inesta and his team. We will be sure to tell you all about it in our next issue and, of course, online.

Some times I feel more like Carmen San Diego than the publisher of *Animation Magazine*. After the festivities in Mexico, I fly directly to Toulouse for the annual Cartoon Forum. This event has been one of the key elements in the growth of European animation for a quarter century, and continues to support international producers, with pitch sessions and of course networking events. While I head east, our Assoc. Editor Mercedes Milligan will be taking off for Canada to cover TAC and OIAF, so catch her between screenings and tell her about your fall market plans.

If we miss you at any of these events, I hope to see you at our Summit in November for three days of industry panels and master-classes in Marina Del Rey. Top-level participants are in the process of being confirmed and will be announced soon. You can read about all these enriching events in the pages of this issue.

Hope you are well rested from the summer holidays and ready for the markets,

Jean Thoren
Publisher
jthoren@animationmagazine.net



Special Announcement

The staff and contributors are thrilled to welcome Editor-in-Chief Thomas J. McLean's second daughter, Clara Maureen, to the extended *Animag* family. **Congratulations to Jessica, Tom and big sister Kaya!**



ANIMATION MAGAZINE

October 2015

Vol. 29, Issue 8, No. 253

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List Rental
Quantum List Marketing
(480) 860-6036
ANIMATION MAGAZINE
(USPS 015-877/ISSN 1041-617X)

Published monthly except for combined issues of April/May
August/September, by Animation Magazine
24943 Kit Carson Road
Calabasas, CA 91302

Periodicals postage paid at Woodland Hills Post Office CA,
And additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER:
SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO MAILING ADDRESS:
ANIMATION MAGAZINE
26500 W. Agoura Rd. Ste. 102-651
Calabasas, CA 91302

TO SUBSCRIBE:

For the U.S., the rate is \$60 for 1 year or \$95 for 2 years.
Rates for Canada and Mexico are US\$75 for 1 year or US\$120 for 2 years delivered by
foreign airmail. Foreign rates are US\$90 for 1 year or US\$145 for 2 years delivered by
foreign airmail. Please allow six to eight weeks for initial delivery.
Also available in a digital version for \$36 for 1 year or \$60 for 2 years.

Animation Magazine
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News & Notes

FEATURES

Disney Details Its Full Slate at D23

The fans were out in force at the fourth D23 Expo, held Aug. 14-16 at the Anaheim Convention Center, and, boy, did they get an earful as Disney unveiled details about just about every project on its feature development slate, both animated and live action.

Here are the highlights:



Disney Animation

- The studio announced a new animated feature *Gigantic*, based on the legend of Jack and the Beanstalk and due in 2018, directed by Nathan Greno (*Tangled*) and produced by Dorothy McKim (*Get A Horse!*). It will include music from Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez.
- Shakira will lend her Grammy-winning voice to Gazelle, the biggest pop star in the upcoming animated feature *Zootopia*.

Pixar

- Pixar shared new footage from its upcoming feature *The Good Dinosaur*.
- *Finding Dory* star Ellen DeGeneres appeared with cast members and director Andrew Stanton to offer new details of the story, which reunites Dory with friends Nemo and Marlin on a search for answers about her past.
- John Lasseter lead a celebration of the 20th anniversary of *Toy Story* and a sneak peek at *Toy Story 4*.
- Pixar revealed that its Day of the Dead-themed animated feature is titled *Coco* and it will be directed by Lee Unkrich and produced by Darla K. Anderson.

Lucasfilm

- A new poster painted by Drew Struzan was released for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, due out Dec. 18.
- Colin Trevorrow will direct *Star Wars: Episode IX*, due in 2019.
- A photo of the cast of the standalone *Star Wars* movie *Rogue One* was released to coincide with the start of principal photography.

Disney Parks

- Disney chairman and CEO Bob Iger announced that *Star Wars*-themed lands were coming to Disneyland in Anaheim and Disney's Hollywood Studio in Orlando, Fla. The plans include creating Disney's largest single-themed land expansions ever at 14 acres each.

Marvel

- Producer Kevin Feige offered a sneak peek at *Captain America: Civil War* as well as a look at preproduction art for *Doctor Strange*.

Disney Live Action

- Also spotlighted at the show were Jon Favreau's live-action take on *The Jungle Book*, and Johnny Depp appeared in character as Captain Jack Sparrow to promote *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*.

TELEVISION

9 Story Media Acquires Ireland's Brown Bag Films

Toronto-based 9 Story Media Group has acquired Irish studio Brown Bag Films. This is the first acquisition for 9 Story following an equity investment from media entrepreneur Neil Court and Zelnick Media Capital last year. Terms of the transaction, which closed Aug. 17, were not disclosed. Brown Bag Films will retain its brand, with Cathal Gaffney, founder and CEO of Brown Bag Films; Darragh O'Connell, founder and creative director; and the senior management team continuing to lead the company.

FEATURES

China's Original Force Makes Feature Film Move

Chinese service studio Original Force Animation appointed Hollywood veterans Sandra Rabins and Penney Finkelman Cox as co-presidents and opened a new office in Los Angeles.

Rabins and Finkelman Cox were instrumental in the launch of DreamWorks' and Sony's animation branches.

The company plans to produce a CG-animated feature every 18 months. Newly onboard are *Home* producer Christopher Jenkins, *Rugrats Go Wild* director John Eng, *Simpsons* producer Bob Bendetson, and former marketing president for Universal and MGM Peter Adeo, who is consulting with Original Force for its first forays.

Features currently in production are *Duck Duck Goose* (directed by Jenkins), *Oldzilla* (written and directed by Bendetson, co-written by Art Everett) and *QQ Speed*, a co-production with Tencent Holding based on a popular Chinese online racing game, which Eng is developing and will direct. Additional feature projects in development include an adaptation of Grace Lin's Newberry Honor book *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, and Greg Johnson's *Riding Giants*.

FEATURES

'Dragon Ball Z' Feature Earns \$8M in Limited Run

FUNimation's grass-roots limited theatrical release of the anime feature *Dragon Ball Z: Resurrection F* quietly earned a solid

\$8 million in ticket sales in its nine-day release.

The tally makes the feature the No. 9 all-time grossing anime film in domestic release, putting it ahead of Hayao Miyazaki's *The Wind Rises* and *Howl's Moving Castle*.

Having earned \$51.6 million in foreign markets, the movie has a worldwide gross of \$58.9 million.

The number of cinemas showing the feature varied widely in its run, from under 100 to a height of more than 900.

TELEVISION

Nick Greenlights 'Pinky Malinky,' Orders Season 10 of 'OddParents'

Nickelodeon has greenlit 20 episodes of social-media influenced animated comedy *Pinky Malinky* and a 13-episode 10th season for the Emmy-winning animated series *The Fairly OddParents*.

Pinky Malinky is produced by Nickelodeon Animation Studios in Burbank and is set to premiere in 2016. The series is co-created and co-executive produced by Chris Garbutt and Rikke Asbjørn (*The Amazing World of Gumball*) and executive produced by Scott Kreamer (*Kung Fu Panda: Legends of Awesomeness*). Created and executive produced by Butch Hartman, *The Fairly OddParents* is the network's third longest running animated series behind *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Dora the Explorer*.

FEATURES

WB Plans All-Animated 'Scooby-Doo' Feature

Warner Bros. has announced plans to produce an animated feature based on Hanna-Barbera's classic TV toon *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?*

Tony Cervone, whose toon town credits include *Space Jam*, Cartoon Network's *The Looney Tunes Show* and *Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated* will direct. The project will be produced by Charles Roven and Richard Suckle, and the studio has staked out Sept. 21, 2018, for a release.

Other key animation industry names attached to the new feature are producer Allison Abbate (*The Iron Giant*, *Fantastic*

Mr. Fox, *The Corpse Bride*, *Frankenweenie*), exec producer Dan Povenmire (*Phineas and Ferb*, *Family Guy*) and screenwriter Matt Lieberman (*The Jetsons*).

TELEVISION

Disney Sets 'The Lion Guard' TV Movie Ahead of Series Debut

The epic sweep of *The Lion King* will be extended this fall as Disney Channel in

November premieres *The Lion Guard: Return of the Roar*, an all-new, primetime television movie.

The feature will presage *The Lion Guard* series, arriving in early 2016 on Disney Channels and Disney Junior channels around the world.

Ford Riley (*Special Agent Oso*) developed the movie and series and serves as exec producer. Howy Parkins (*Jake and the Never Land Pirates*) is the

director. Christopher Willis (*Mickey Mouse*) is the composer and Beau Black (*Miles from Tomorrowland*) is singer/songwriter.



FEATURES

DreamWorks Animation Posts \$38.6 Million Q2 Loss

DreamWorks Animation reported a loss

of \$38.6 million in the second quarter of the year – a drop of 45 cents per share, compared to the 18 cents per share loss during the same period last year.

In a statement, DWA noted that the losses included \$20.9 million in costs related to its forward-looking restructuring actions. Without these, the loss comes to \$11.6 million, or 13 cents per share.

On the upside, DWA's revenues hit \$170.8 million – up almost 40 percent – thanks to better-than-expected results from its most recent release, *Home*.

TV revenues also more than doubled since last year, bringing in nearly \$55 million. DWA's new media ventures like AwesomenessTV accounted for \$14.6m, up from \$11.5 in Q2 2014.

HOME ENTERTAINMENT

'Collected Works' Miyazaki Blu-ray Will Be Amazon Exclusive

For the first time ever in North America, legendary director Hayao Miyazaki's films will be available in a single home-video collection.

The Collected Works of Hayao Miyazaki on Blu-ray will launch Nov. 17 exclusively through Amazon.com.

In addition to all 11 of Miyazaki's feature-length animated masterpieces, the 12-disc collection also includes a 1972 TV pilot directed by Miyazaki and three episodes from the hit anime series *Little Samurai*. The handsome set also boasts a commemorative booklet. ➤

Xiamen Another Sign of China Rising

Drawing big crowds of spectators and professionals, the 8th Xiamen International Animation Festival, held Aug. 21-24, is yet another example of animation's growing momentum in China.

Held at the International Conference & Exhibition Center in Xiamen, a port city across the straight from Taiwan, the event encompassed everything from the Cyber Sousa Awards and cosplay to comics and games elements, symposia and competitions.

Xiamen has developed as a major hub for animation in China, and is home to such significant companies as Qingniao Animation, Xiamen Domoko Animation, Fengyun Animations and DEYA.

The Chinese feature animation business is rapidly on the rise over the last few years. In 2013, Chinese animated films totted up about \$250 million, which doubled to about \$500 million last year and is expected to reach \$900 million this year.

This year has seen the success of Tian Xiaopeng's CG family film *The Monkey King: Hero Is Back*, which has surpassed every American animated movie ever released in China.

Russia-based Wizart's CG feature *The Snow Queen* opened July 31 in Beijing, and expanding to some 3,400 screens across the nation. Its success has prompted Wizart to partner with its Chinese distributor – Flame Node Entertainment, which produced *Monkey King* – to co-produce the next film in the series, *Snow Queen 3*. ➤

October Planner

2 Matt Damon awaits a daring space rescue in Ridley Scott's **The Martian**.



9 Set sail for adventure in Disney's live-action **Pan** from director Joe Wright.



3-4 **MIP Junior and MIPCOM** (5th-8th) take over the Palais des Festivals in Cannes this week. [mipjunior.com] [mipcom.com]

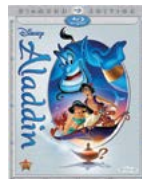
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13-15 **Brand Licensing Europe** in London introduces a new educational strand this year and a major new prize for License This! [brandlicensing.eu]



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Out of the vault comes Disney's **Aladdin: Diamond Edition** on Blu-ray and DVD.

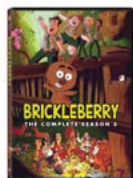


hit theaters with **Goosebumps** and Guillermo del Toro's **Crimson Peak**.

16 Digital terrors for young and old



6 **Brickleberry: The Complete Season 3** is joined by **Adventure Time: The Enchiridion**, **Avatar: The Last Airbender - The Complete Series**, **South Park: The Complete 18th Season** and **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Complete First and Second Seasons** on disc today.



8-11 **New York Comic Con** offers special guests (like John DiMaggio), screenings, and championship-level cosplay at the Javits Center. [newyorkcomiccon.com]

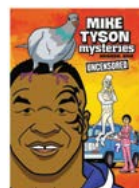


17 Hey Beavis, it's like ... **Mike Judge's** birthday.

19-23 Head to beautiful Turin, Italy and learn about the latest in CG filmmaking at the **VIEW Conference**. [viewconference.it]



20 Snap up **Mike Tyson Mysteries: Season 1, Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas** or the limited edition **Back to the Future** complete set on DVD or Blu-ray.



21 **Mary Blair** was among the **toon legends** born in October – also **Art Babbitt** (8th), **Art Clokey** (12th) and **Ollie Johnston** (31st).

23 Kiss your childhood memories goodbye as the revamped **Jem and the Holograms** comes to the big screen.



25 Happy birthday to **Simpsons** voice actors **Nancy Cartwright** and **Dan Castellaneta** (29th), a.k.a. Bart and Homer!



29-31 Industry experts from across the region converge on Singapore's Marina Bay Sands for **Franchising & Licensing Asia**. [franchiselicenseasia.]



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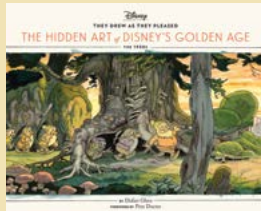
Books We Love

They Drew as They Pleased: The Hidden Art of Disney's Golden Age

By Didier Ghez
[Chronicle Books, \$40]

In the first half of the 20th century, as Walt Disney Studio prepared to tackle some of the most ambitious animated projects of the age, the iconic toon house took a novel tack: hiring a group of artists whose sole duty was to explore visual concepts and inspire their colleagues to reach new heights. This collection – the first in a planned sextet of volumes – brings some of these relatively unsung creative heroes into the light at last.

Ghez, who has profiled other lesser-looked-at nooks of Disney history with *Disney's Grand Tour* and *Disneyland Paris*, showcases four of these pioneering artists with newly uncovered biographical material and largely unpublished artwork from the Disney Archives and Animation Research Library. This tour through the building blocks of the studio's early golden age is sure to inspire with examples culled from short films from the 1930s, unproduced projects, classics *Snow White* and *Pinocchio* and early work for later productions like *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*.

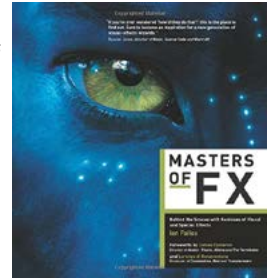


Masters of FX: Behind the Scenes with Geniuses of Visual and Special Effects

By Ian Failes
[Focal Press, \$34.95]

In the current and ever-evolving world of cinema, it's rare to find any Hollywood flick untouched by effects work. Modern-day blockbusters feature CG creations that represent the fantastical (see Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*) to the photorealistic (Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*) and best guesses in between (Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*). Australian journalist Failes reached out to over a dozen leading industry pioneers to uncover the secrets behind some of recent memory's most celebrated sequences.

This educational assemblage takes readers through the mainstream shift from practical to digital effects with original behind-the-scenes imagery, shot breakdowns and detailed explanations from a raft of creatives: Dennis Muren, Bill Westenhofer, Joe Letteri, Rob Legato, Paul Franklin, Richard Edlund, Edson Williams, Karen Goulekas, Chris Corbould, Ian Hunter and Josh Rosengrant.



The Incredible Herb Trimpe

By Dewey Cassell & Aaron Sultan
[TwoMorrows Publishing, \$34.95]

Subject Herb Trimpe had a truly Cinderella story in the comics biz, starting humbly at Marvel Comics running the photostat machine in the '60s, and eventually becoming one of the Marvel Bullpen's most flexible career men. While his accomplishments spanned drawing licensed characters based on toy brands like G.I. Joe and Transformers to working with iconic super heroes like Spider-Man and Iron Man, Trimpe is best known for his eight-year gig on *Incredible Hulk* – and the eventual debut of Wolverine therein.

This retrospective, assembled with Trimpe's full cooperation just before his passing last April, chronicles the artist's life and works through his own voice, as well as the recollections of friends and colleagues like Stan Lee, Tom DeFalco, Roy Thomas, John Romita, Bill Peckmann, Sal Buscema, Joe Sinnott, Larry Hama, Doug Moench, Eliot Brown, Len Wein, Ron Frenz, Steve Englehart and his son, Alex Trimpe. The fitting tribute is heavily illustrated over its 160 pages in full color to bring Trimpe's remarkable legacy to life.



The Daily Zoo 3: Healing Together

By Chris Ayers
[Design Studio Press, \$29.95]

The third installment of Ayers' personal take on art therapy has arrived, and marks year 10 of his recovery from leukemia with an engrossing blend of illustrated adventures. Begun in 2006 as a daily sketchbook project, the latest *Daily Zoo* once again offers an incredibly moving collection of animal drawings paired with musings on his life journey – from the loss of dear friends and the recovery of others, to marriage, to parenthood.

Healing Together follows the tradition of *The Daily Zoo*, bringing readers into an imaginative playground where horses wear lipstick, tigers wear tuxedos and starfish might fight back. The series is an inspiring blend of artistic talent (Ayers' resume as a character designer and concept artist includes *Men in Black II* and *Fantastic Four*) and personal exposition. And, once more, a portion of proceeds for *Daily Zoo 3* will go to cancer research and charities.



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All Hands on Drac

Genndy Tartakovsky draws up a graphic approach to 3D animation in directing the Sony Pictures Animation sequel *Hotel Transylvania 2*. By Tom McLean.

In animation, as in any art form, there are no hard and fast rules. Just ask the animation crew that worked on *Hotel Transylvania 2* for director Genndy Tartakovsky.

"The rules change from shot to shot," says Alan Hawkins, animation supervisor on the Sony Pictures Animation movie. "On other CG movies that I've worked on at other studios, it's more about keeping things on model, keeping things consistent. But Genndy will do a pose that we've never seen before for a shot, or a shape that we've never done before on Drac just because he thought it was the funniest option. It's sort of like the sky's the limit in terms of that kind of thing."

None of which should surprise fans of Tartakovsky's work, which includes creating such iconic 2D animated TV series as *Dexter's Laboratory*, *Samurai Jack*, *Star Wars: Clone Wars* and *Sym-Bionic Titan*. Having brought his style to CG animated features with the successful first *Hotel Transylvania* movie in 2012, Tartakovsky admits his cartoony style is challenging for CG animators to get used to.

"It's kind of a difficult style to just jump into

especially when everyone in the animation community is doing stuff that's different," says Tartakovsky. "To do the cartoony stuff, you need a certain sensibility and understanding, so that's always the challenge."

Opening in theaters Sept. 26, *Hotel Transylvania 2* picks up with Dracula, voiced by Adam Sandler, hosting a wedding for his daughter Mavis (Selena Gomez) and her human beau



Genndy Tartakovsky

Johnny (Andy Samberg), who soon have a son, Dennis. Drac's worries about whether his grandson will be a vampire are amplified when Mavis goes to the human world with Johnny to meet his parents and Drac's old-school father, Vlad (Mel Brooks), shows up at the hotel for an unexpected family visit. Also returning to provide voices for the sequel are Kevin James, Fran Drescher, Steve Buscemi, Molly Shannon, David Spade and Keegan-Michael Key.

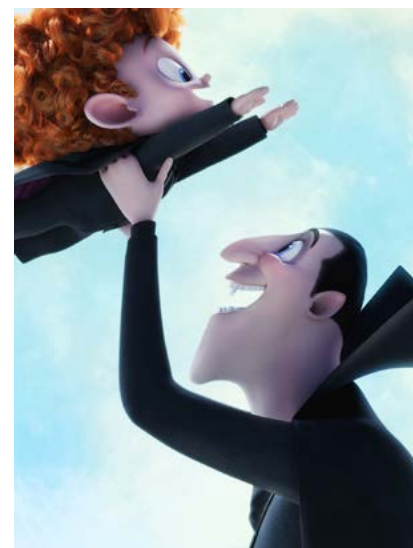
With so large a cast of characters, it was a challenge to ensure the animation focused the audience's attention on the characters and minimized the potential distraction offered by highly detailed CG-rendered environments.

"When you've got five people in a shot, you've got to make sure you know where your focus is and that you're leading the eye of the audience to that," says Tartakovsky. That was easy with the simpler images of 2D animation for television. "With CG, we're finding more and more what we need to do," he says. "For this movie, our colors are crisper; tonally, the movie is richer; and I think that helps make the reads be clear."



In the sequel, Drac is concerned his half-human grandson won't end up a vampire. Sony artists used design cues, colors and camera angles to contrast Mavis' monster world (opposite) and her hubby's human one (above right).

Above and near right: Sketches for Vlad and Dennis by character designer Craig Kellman.



Coming Back

Tartakovsky's graphic style was easier to work with on this movie than the first because the animation tools had been updated to reflect the way he works. That allowed the individual animators to focus on their work to the point the director could tell who had animated which scene.

The director was extremely hands-on with the movie, with daily review sessions running up to 90 minutes and covering about 50 but as many as 60 shots per session, Hawkins says. Tartakovsky gave notes primarily by drawing on top of shots on a touchscreen monitor. The pipeline at Sony Pictures Animation was set up to incorporate those notes into the scene files so they went directly back to the animator.

"We have tools for basically tracing what he's given us, which is such a huge part of the show," says Hawkins. "We do our thing, but the movie looks the way it does because of Genndy. It's all his style, and we're just tourists."

The animators would use the rig to get the tweaks as close as possible to Tartakovsky's drawings and then used a new shape-blend

tool that let them match it exactly. "That's the majority of the workflow, really, is creating something a standard CG rig won't give you," he says. "It really forces the animators to diversify their skills quite a bit."

But applying a 2D approach in 3D brings up some interesting conflicts, especially when stereoscopic 3D is involved. Eye-line issues in particular were tough, Tartakovsky says, because in 2D it's no problem to do a profile character looking at a character in three-quarters profile, but in 3D it looks odd. "The 3D artist has to figure out a way to put them in the right space and create depth in a different way," he says.

Among the technical advances made for the movie was the development of a new motion blur system that was dubbed "Genndy Blur" that worked with the director's style. "The motion blur just does not like our style of animation because it's so fast, and so it would literally just wipe drawings away," he says. The new system "acts more like the way we draw and the way we think of motion blur in animation."

Tartakovsky almost passed on the sequel, feeling after the first movie it was time to move on. "I started thinking about the characters and my intimate relationship with the animators and the animation style that we did and there was a lot of ownership in that for me," he says. "And so I thought maybe I'll give it another shot and do it."

The idea of bringing in Drac's father, Vlad, was another key selling point for the director. "It was really exciting because it was like: 'Oh yeah! Dracula's father, what could that be like, design wise?' And, 'Where does a character like Dracula come from?' And that started to excite me."

Much of the film's humor and story comes from the idea that the monsters are accepted by the human world – tying perfectly into Drac's concerns his grandson may not carry on the family tradition of being vampire.

"It's harder and harder to become a monster in this new world where freaks are accepted, so to speak," says Tartakovsky. That's a point that also worked for Mavis, who is looking to



be accepted by Johnny's family when they both stand out.

Personality drove the design for Vlad, voiced by comedy legend Mel Brooks. "We know he's going to be very curmudgeonly, he's going to be old school, he's imposing but also very old – and at the same time, he's gotta be comedic," says Tartakovsky. Lots of sketches led to a bit of a funny old man look that was refined by adding a touch of F.W. Murnau's original cinematic vampire classic. "We wanted to bring a little *Nosferatu* into it just because that's the OG Dracula, or vampire, and so there's little elements of it in the giant big ears."

Hawkins says most of the characters from the first movie were well established, but the new ones quickly developed their own styles. Vlad, for example, is less exaggerated and more of a slow, controlled and monolithic character, Hawkins says. The Cronies, who are part of Vlad's gang and the eventual main antagonists of the movie, are given a layer of simulated muscle and wings to give them more detail than the other characters in the movie.

"That was really tough to collaborate with

because it's done by another department and the nature of Genndy's posing usually makes it very difficult for simulations and things like that to occur," says Hawkins.

Additionally, the movie has a much larger character count than the first one, with many more background variations and different costumes used. "The setup team and the modelers definitely had their hands full with that – and the animators, too, because the more characters you have the less you can focus on (each of) them."

For the look of the movie, production designer Michael Kurinsky sought contrast between the monster world and the human world.

"What I did was I just contrasted shape languages," says Kurinsky. "If the monster world was tall and vertical, the human world is more horizontal and flat and one-story. If the monster world is more colorful lighting and coming from different kind of angles – up angles and things like that – the human world was drabber and even."

The production was quick, with animation starting in October 2014 and taking about 10 months to complete by a crew that grew to include at its high point 110 animators.

At left, examples of Tartakovsky's approach to making notes for shot dailies. These over-drawings were entered into the scene files to return to the animators for revision.



"We basically made the movie in under three years from first script to delivery," says producer Michelle Murdocca. "We didn't get down to script writing until September of 2012, so it was a pretty tight schedule, and the script that we got in November of 2012 is nothing like the movie that we'll release."

Working with Sandler

Though he's a star in the animation world, most people who buy a ticket to *Hotel Transylvania 2* are more likely to recognize Sandler, who voices Drac and is executive producer on the movie along with writer Robert Smigel. Tartakovsky says they brought a strong point of view to the project and all parties needed to reach a consensus on the best way to proceed.

"It's a lot of trial and error," says Tartakovsky. "They're very set in what they do and sometimes it's real successful and sometimes it's not, and so we have to prove ourselves. If I come up with a joke and they go, 'Eh, that's okay,' I go, 'Well, let me board it and show it to you,' because once you see it, it becomes something else."

"We're basically partners with them," says Murdocca. "They're writers and we partner with them to collaborate on all the right ideas and make sure we're going in the best direction for the movie."

With the movie almost completed, Tartakovsky says he's anxious to finish it and move on to his next project, an original feature idea titled *Can You Imagine?*, at least in part because he feels pressure to make the movies he wants to make while he can.

"I remember when (Hayao) Miyazaki retired, he had only made 11 movies," says Tartakovsky. "The 11 are amazing, but when you think of it like, 'I only have so many left,' you start to panic. If you've got 10 movies left, you want to make sure you get them made." ☞

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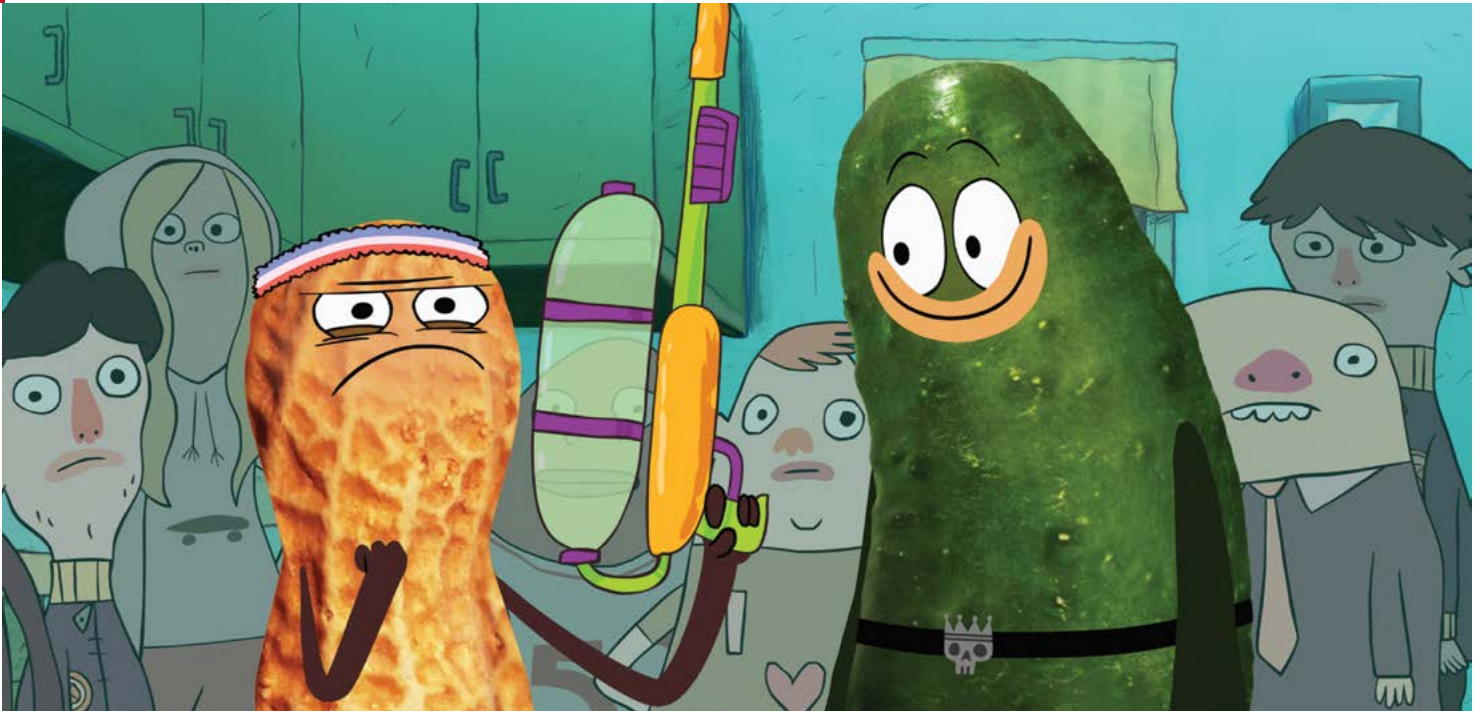
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Buddies to the End

Teen boys' authentic relationship grounds the lunacy in Disney XD's new series *Pickle and Peanut*. By Tom McLean.

When Disney gave the green light last year to *Pickle and Peanut* and released a crude early image from the series, the reception online was brutal with comments indicating the show signaling "the end of ideas" and even the start of the End Times.

Those comments are enshrined on a billboard in the production office of the series at Disney TV Animation in Glendale, Calif., and frequently referred to by executive producers Noah Z. Jones and Josh Tressler, and the show's staff, as they work on completing the show's 20 half-hour first season.

"It's so easy to tell everyone – literally every single human being in the world – that you hate something," says Jones.

But underdog status suits *Pickle and Peanut*, a plucky, unpolished buddy comedy that mixes animation and live-action techniques and is set to debut Sept. 7 at 9 p.m. ET/PT on Disney XD.

"When we pitched the pilot, nobody really knew what we were doing," says Jones, who previously created *Fish Hooks* for Disney. "At the first pitch, we were like, 'It's the end of the road but we had a really good time.' So then they said 'Oh, we like it.' And we said: 'Really? Are you guys sure?'"

The show is about Pickle, voiced by Jon Heder, and Peanut, voiced by Johnny Pender-

ton – two teenage boys in the final year of high school in an anonymous suburb of Reno, Nev., who are looking to have as much fun as they can before they have to grow up.

The show is "low-fi, kind of scrappy; an authentic description of two teenage boy best friends," Jones says. "They don't have secret handshakes and call each other 'bro' and high-five all the time. We said that we wanted to do something that's different. They're not going to say 'I love you, man' and 'Let's hug it out!'"

The duo mostly hang out and interact with the town's oddball cast, which includes their problem-solving friend Champion Horse, sometime friend Lazer, annoying friend McSweats, rival kid Wayne, Mjart Mart coworker Spedacular Donkey, troublemaker Sneaky Patty and the fake 9-year-old doctor Dr. Pamplermousse, MD.

The look of the show is scrappy – the town is as drab and boring as can be, with a big box

store, a cemetery in the middle of town and even train tracks that run between the lead characters' homes. The idea was to reflect Jones and Tressler's own experiences growing up in Rochester, N.Y., and Knoxville, Tenn., respectively.

Production on the show is outline driven, with outlines turned over to the show's two directors and three permanent storyboard artists to flesh out into 11-minute episodes. It's then turned into an animatic that Jones and Tressler help polish before it's sent to Copernicus Studios in Halifax, Canada, for animation.

"We are a scrappy crew," says Tressler, acknowledging that the crew is small and the board artists in particular carry a heavy burden.

But Tressler, who developed the show and previously directed and produced music videos and TV series such as *Yo Gabba Gabba!*, says they found that as long as they kept the boys' relationship authentic, they could tell any kind of story they wanted, from having a crazed mutant zit run through town to Pickle learning to swim.

"They're making bad decisions and doing bone-headed things, but they're not doing it out of malice. They're not doing it because they don't like people. They're just trying things out," adds Jones. ☞



Putting More Spring in Your Springboard, Part 1

Think of your favorite episode of your favorite cartoon... Got it? Well, guess what – the perfect plot, the ingenious jokes: those grew out of a humble springboard!

A springboard is the bare-bones idea of the script you hope to “sell” to a producer, who will then hire you to write it. At just 3-5 sentences long, it has to grab the producers’ attention and convince them your concept will lead to a great script that suits their show. It has to be original, “hook-y” and fit well to the show rules. This month, we’ve asked Baboon’s writers to shed a little light on the simple, yet elegant process.

– Claire Stenger

How do you come up with, and write, a good and original springboard?

Joe Vitale (Angry Birds Toons, Felix the Cat): I always start with the hook; the one gimmick that’ll drive the story. “Character X pretends to be a member of the enemy gang!” “Character Y finds a jetpack!” or “Character Z gets amnesia!” None of these are an actual story, but they’re enough to start building a story around.

I love springboards because they don’t require you to have all the answers. You just need a hook, and if that hook gets a bite, then you can figure out the rest later.

John Fountain (The Fairly OddParents,



My Life As A Teenage

Robot): For example, I’ve written springboards about two characters in a staring contest, and another where the entire plot revolved around making a bowl of cereal for breakfast. Anyone can write a springboard that ends with a line like “...and then all hell breaks loose and everyone in town riots in the streets...” [But] I love the comedy that comes from unexpected places, like that little web of skin between your pinkie toes.

Meaning, taking the simple idea one step or more further, to a place people usually wouldn’t think of?

Vitale: Yes. But that’s the second step. Coming up with that hook is first, and is either the easiest or hardest part of the whole process. Sometimes it’ll just come to me whether I’m looking for it or not. Other times, I have to spend a lot of time and energy thinking one up. When the latter happens, I find it helpful to leave it alone for a while and come back to it later. Restart the brain, if you will.

Then it’s simply a matter of filling in the rest with very broad strokes. If your character finds a jetpack, what’s he going to do with it? How will that affect the other characters? Will it help or hinder their overall goal? How will it create conflict?

Fountain: I try to turn it into a game where I come up with the most impossibly, drastically, ridiculous idea imaginable, and then force myself to make it work. Similarly, if it’s a comedy show, I’ll start with a topic



that is unfunny, and then go spelunking to mine those hidden gems in the deepest nooks and crannies of an idea for what’s funny in it.

What other ways can you then add more potency to it?

Vitale: In action-oriented series, it’s especially helpful if you can come up with a “ticking clock,” something that has to happen in a certain time or else something *bad* will happen to your hero. Maybe the jetpack only has so much fuel, but your character needs to get to a far-off location. Will he make it? If not, how does he get around that and still save the day?

OK, so first find a hook, then figure out what problem this causes for a character, then add the ticking clock to put more pressure on that. Do you have to solve the ending?

Vitale: Springboards can be left open-ended (well, for most clients), which frees you up to try out as many crazy ideas as you can think up. End it with something like, “Will he make it across the Atlantic Ocean, or will the radioactive Puffer Fish catch up to him?” Of course he’ll make it – but I have no idea how. Not until the network buys the pitch and I’m obligated to figure it out in script.

Coming soon in Part 2: More tips from Jymn Magon (DuckTales, Winnie the Pooh) and Mike de Seve (Monsters vs. Aliens, Peg+Cat).

Cartoon Forum 2015

Top producers return to Toulouse to tout their wares September 15-18.

This month, over 850 industry professionals from 30-plus countries will convene on the ancient trade hub of Toulouse, France, for Europe's premiere pitching and co-production event as the 2015 edition of Cartoon Forum kicks off. Having celebrated its 25th installment last year, the Forum continues to bolster local talent and international collaboration. To date, the event has helped a staggering 594 animated series projects gather roughly 2 billion euros in financing – and toon fans the world over are the richer for it.

This year, the organizers at Cartoon have selected 80 projects to be presented to potential buyers, co-producers and financiers. These were culled from a record 150 submissions. Of the 80 selections, French projects

make up the majority with 30 titles, followed by the United Kingdom with 11 and Ireland with nine. Italy, Spain and Germany each have seven, as does Scandinavia as a whole (with four from Denmark alone). Belgium has four representatives, the Netherlands has three, and for the first time three Korean projects will participate in the event.

The Korean entries – FelixStudio's *Hobgoblin Magician*, PriSystem's *The Mole Farmer*, *Rabby* and Tak Toon Enterprise's *Galaxy Kids* – build on the collaborations established at Cartoon Connection Korea. These newcomers join returning, established Euro houses Folimage, JAM Media, Futurikon, Dargaud, Monster, Imira, Kavaleer, HiT, Cartoon Saloon, WunderWerk and others to showcase the diverse offerings of the world animation scene.

A couple of noteworthy trends have emerged this year. Firstly, cross-platform concepts represent 55% of this year's pitches. Four of these were seen at Cartoon 360 in June: *The Memets* by White Door Ent. (Spain), *Krabstadt* by Monkey Machine Film (Sweden), *My Dream Pets* by Contentinum (Belgium) and *The Von Mopp Method* by Chicken's Chicots Prod. (France). Secondly, preschool fare makes up one third of the offerings this year, reflecting the growing number of kid-dedicated channels in the region. Projects aimed at children ages six to 11 still dominated at 53%, while 10% of the presentations will be aimed at adult and young adult audiences.

Learn more about Cartoon Forum and this year's projects at cartoon-media.eu.

Pitch Picks:

Animanimals

Studio Film Bilder (Germany)
Preschool | 26 x 4
Digital 2D, Cross-Platform

Betty and Yeti

A Productions (U.K.)
Preschool | 52 x 11
Digital 2D

Bottle Pirates

Sacrebleu Productions (France)
Kids 6-8 | 26 x 11
Digital 2D, Cross-Platform

Dickie

De Hofleveranciers/Beast Animation (Belgium)
YA & Adults | 104 x 1
Digital 2D, Cross-Platform

Fred's Adventures

WideFrameStudio (Spain)
Kids 6-8 | 26 x 7
Digital 2D/3D, Cross-Platform

HeroEEK!

TeamTO (France)
Kids 6-8 | 78 x 7
CG, Cross-Platform

Jessy and Nussy

JAM Media (Ireland)
Preschool | 52 x 11
Digital 2D/Puppet/Live-Action

No-No

Autour de Minuit Prod. (France)
Preschool | 26 x 5
CG

Off

Graphilm (Italy)
Kids 6-8 | 52 x 11
Digital 2D/3D

Sambakap

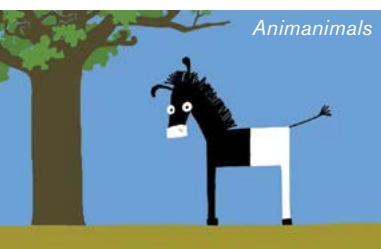
I Can Fly/Fais Peter la Prod! (France)
Kids 9-11 | 26 x 26
Digital 2D/3D

Squish

Cottonwood (France)
Kids 6-8 | 52 x 11
Digital 2D, Cross-Platform

Tony & Abigail

Wiggleywoo (Ireland)
Kids 9-11 | 26 x 7
Digital 2D





Fred's Adventures



Off



HeroEEK



Sambakap



Jessy and Nessy



Squish



No-No



Tony & Abigail

Happy Traveler

Millimages' *Molang* racks up fans, sales ahead of its global debut.

He has yet to hit the airwaves, but *Molang* is already poised as a global hit.

Produced by Millimages, the character was so well received when pitched to international TV buyers that the French production studio doubled its production order.

"We started production with 52 episode but, because it was so successful, most buyers asked for 104, so the format is now 104," says Roch Lener, president and CEO of Millimages.

He attributes the success of the character to its unique graphic style and the charisma of the character. "People understand that this is about happiness and that is exactly what the Molang character conveys to the people," Lener says.

Created in 2009 by Korean university student Hye-Ji Yoon, Molang first appeared on her blog as stickers that were an immediate hit with girls ages 10-20.

Developed at Millimages by producer Marie-Caroline Villand, the series is an affectionate and humorous look at the relationship between Molang, an eccentric and enthusiastic rabbit, and Piu Piu, a shy, discreet and emotional little chick. Despite their many differ-



"People understand that this is about happiness and that is exactly what the Molang character conveys to the people."

– Roch Lener, president and CEO of Millimages

ences, these two enjoy a unique friendship.

The series has a very simple and smooth art style that appeals to preschoolers everywhere, Lener says. The characters speak in a language created from scratch that ends up being simple and universal enough for viewers of all ages to understand what the characters are saying. The humorous stories aim for similarly universal concepts: happiness, friendship and tolerance.

Lener describes Molang as a positive character who is happy, kind, considerate and creative. Much of the story in the show comes from contrasting Molang's personality with that of Piu Piu, who is more introverted, sensitive, cautious and emotional.

Millimages – presenting a new 52 x 11 min. show at Cartoon Forum titled *Cherry Coco* – has sold *Molang* in about two-thirds of the world, with free TV buyers including Disney in the United States, Latin America, Japan and Asia Pacific; Canal Plus and Piwi Plus in France; and Cartoonito UK in the

U.K. and Ireland. Pay TV buyers include VRT in Belgium; Tele-Quebec in Canada; NRK in Norway; Karusel in Russia; and TVC in Spain.

Molang also is a force in digital markets, having broken out as an emoticon on the instant messaging apps KaKaoTalk in Korea and WeChat in China. Plans are afoot for casual app games, chat apps, more digital games and more.

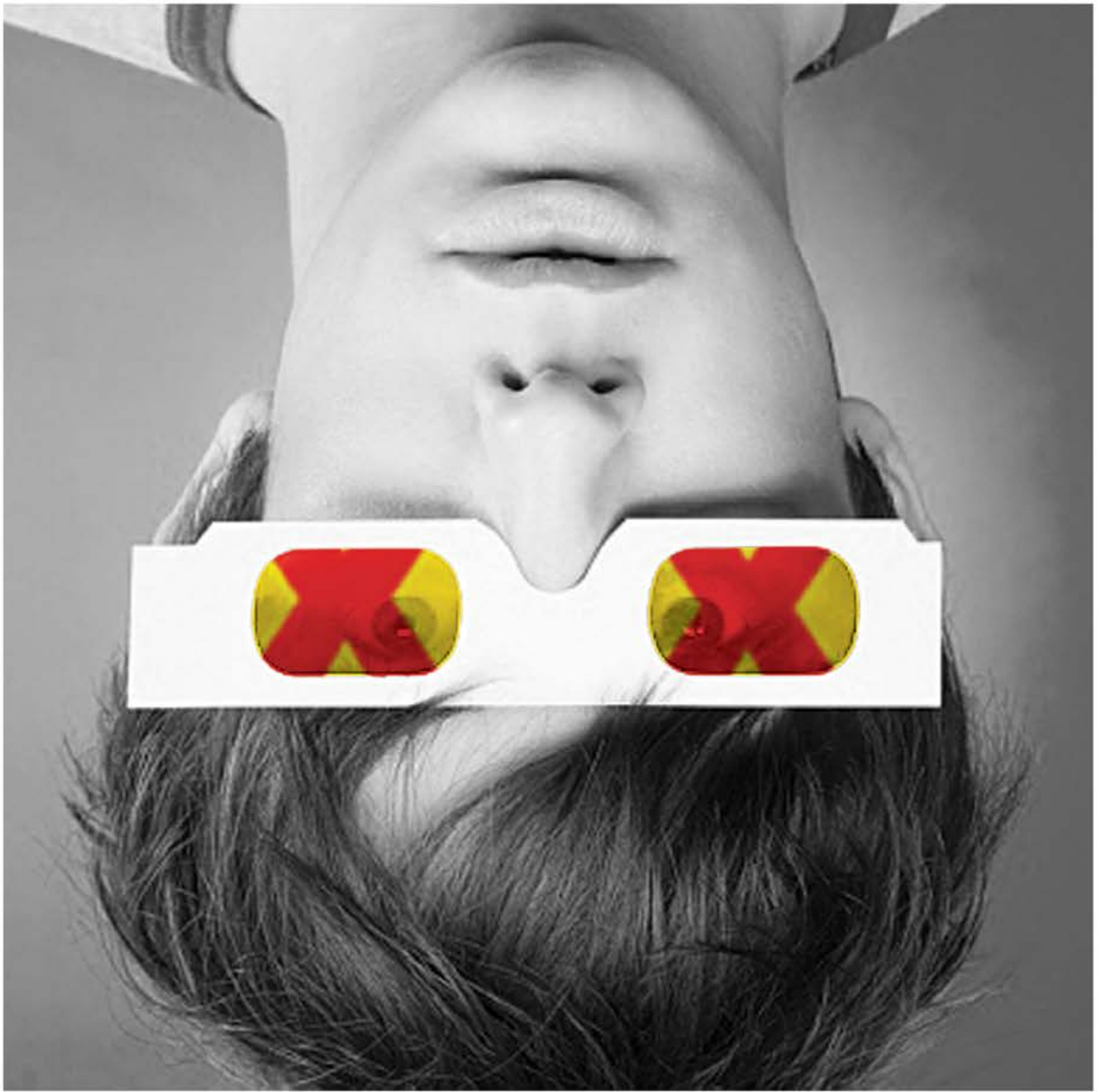
With the first half of the series scheduled for delivery in December, followed by the second half in the first part of 2016, the company is now working on Molang's merchandising potential and seeking a master toy licensee, Lener says.

All of which should further expand Molang's popularity, which in Asia has spawned more than 8,000 products and seen the character made part of Seoul Grand Park, which is South Korea's first theme park.

"The character is really getting strong positive feedback from every part of the world," says Lener. ☺



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MIP Junior 2015: 10 Toons to Track

This October 3 & 4, the annual MIP Junior gathering will draw key players from the global kids' entertainment business down on beautiful Cannes for two days of elbow-rubbing, deal-making and trend-watching at the Grand Hyatt Cannes Hotel Martinez. Highlights of the 2015 edition include a keynote address by Hasbro Studios president Stephen Davis, the inaugural Kids' Content Trendsetter Awards and a World Premiere Screening of Cyber Group Studios' much anticipated animated series *Zorro: The Chronicles*. Might we also point *mesdames et messieurs* toward 10 other fresh toon tidbits on offer?

Danger Mouse

Produced by: FremantleMedia Kids & Family Entertainment and CBBC co-production with animation by Boulder Media

Created by: Original series created by Cosgrove Hall Productions

Format: 52 x 11

Target audience: Kids 6–11

Type of animation: 2D with mixed media

Synopsis: Based on the classic '80s cartoon, action and comedy collide in the rebooted version of *Danger Mouse*. The new series has been updated with gadgets galore for today's tech-savvy and content-hungry kids. The laughs are set to be even louder as the world's smallest secret agent faces mightier missions, voracious villains and knee-trembling threats.

Selling points: The brand has well-established global appeal, and the reboot boasts a pedigree production team including director Robert Cullen (*The Amazing World of Gumball*), top notch writers lead by Ben Ward (*Horrible Histories*), animators and voice talent. "I've loved Danger Mouse my whole life. Danger Mouse was a significant part of my childhood. So to get a chance to do it is like getting a chance to step into your childhood, which is both a magical and a potentially hazardous thing. It will be awesome, I can't wait to see it, let alone hear myself in it," John Oliver said on his *Last Week Tonight* show when he joined Lena Headey, Stephen Fry, Alexander Armstrong and Kevin Eldon on the cast list. And, FremantleMedia already has several key licensing partners signed up.

Broadcasters: CBBC (U.K.); Netflix will premiere the show in North America, Latin America, Nordics, Benelux and Japan

Status: In final stages of production



love to discover new things, cooperate to accomplish their goals and – most of all – to make music! In each two-minute short, Doowett and one of his peculiar pals play together, combining their unique skills and the sounds they use to express their feelings to create a charming duet while they tackle the task at hand.

Selling points: The cutesy designs for Doowett and his friends are tailor-made to appeal to youngsters, with a contemporary, pop-art feel to their simple shapes and bright colors. And, by using musical sounds to communicate, the monsters' antics are instantly accessible to viewers all over the world. Picture Box recently acquired the series along with several others, which will launch as part of its catalog at the market this year. "We are thrilled to add these high-quality programs to our growing kids' catalog," said Kate Sanagan, company partner and director of sales. "They all possess the characteristics that our other kids' titles embody, including entertaining and educating kids around the world."

Broadcasters: CityTV (Canada)



Hank the Cowdog

Produced by: HTC Productions in collaboration with Huhu Studios (New Zealand)

Created by: Based on the books by John Erickson

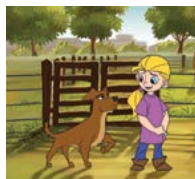
Format: 26 x 11 or 13 x 22

Target audience: Kids 5–11

Type of animation: 2D

Synopsis: Like the award-winning children's books, the series will follow the comedic adventures of lovable mutt Hank, the self-appointed "Head of Ranch Security" on the family-run Texas cattle ranch where he lives. Joining Hank is dopey dog Drover, who helps protect the ranch from crafty coyote brothers Rip and Snort, Sinister the bobcat, sly fox Frankie and other cagey (and uncaged) animals. For all his efforts, Hank still manages to get in trouble with his humans – mostly thanks to conniving Pete the barn cat.

Selling points: *Hank* is a real by-your-bootstraps success, having evolved from self-published stories to an international property. The combination of engaging kids in rustic, russlin' adventures in the South-



west combined with educational points about both wild and domesticated animals have helped Hank's stories touch young readers in Spanish, Danish, Farsi and Chinese. "Hank has over eight million fans," says the author's son and co-screenwriter Mark Erickson, "and they are hungry to see these characters and types of stories be produced with the respect and talent HTC will be bringing."

HeroEEK!

Produced by: TeamTO

Created by: Julien Faivre

Format: 52 x 11 and 52 x 1

Target audience: Kids

Type of animation: CG

Synopsis: We all know that when the world is in danger, it's time to call on a superhero to save the day with their awesome powers and extremely chic costumes. But what do these saviors of humankind do when the world is perfectly at peace? Believe it or not, everyday life isn't that easy for a superhero – especially when you are sharing an apartment with other underutilized superhumans.

Selling points: With hit series like *Angelo Rules* and their first feature *Yellowbird* under their belt, the TeamTO crew knows how to deliver quality animation – and comedy. *HeroEEK!* is developed for both linear and nonlinear viewing. So, in addition to showing viewers how hard it is to go grocery shopping while wearing a cool mask or take a shower in full body armor in their animated adventures, the heroes will also be blogging their misadventures and otherwise engaging viewers across platforms.



Doowett

Produced by: Adrian Dean & Doowett Productions for CityTV Saskatchewan, in association with Rogers Communications and Canada Media Fund

Distributed by: Picture Box Distribution

Format: 32 x 2

Target audience: Preschool

Type of animation: Digital 2D

Synopsis: Doowett and his adorable monster friends

Popples

Produced by: Saban Brands and ZAG Entertainment

Created by: Original concept by American Greetings

Format: 52 x 13

Target audience: Kids

Type of animation: CG

Synopsis: This updated, high-energy comedy series about an amazing species of creatures that can pop into and out of fuzzy, technicolor balls follows BPPs (Best Popple Pals) Bubbles,



Sunny, Lulu, Izzy and Yikes. Always wanting to help their friends, neighbors and each other, their efforts often backfire in hilarious ways. Luckily, they always manage to save the day with a timely pop or two.

Selling Points: One of the revamped properties commissioned as a fresh Netflix original, the show has a built-in fan base of adults who fondly remember the classic '80s toy line and 2D series, while amping up the entertainment for today's demanding kids. Bolstering the show will be new products from master toy licensee Spin Master, including plushies launching in the U.S. in December, and a global pan-category rollout set for next year. "If you look at Netflix's order of originals, this hits on all levels for them," Saban's SVP of global distribution Fred Soulie said. "They are looking for IP with legs and this clearly meant something to them – many of their executives could have been watching it growing up."

Delivery date: Fall 2015 on Netflix

Regal Academy

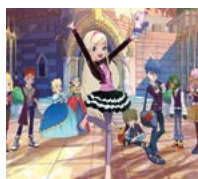
Produced by: Rainbow

Created by: Iginio Straffi

Format: 26 x half-hour

Target audience: Kids 5-10

Type of animation: Digital 2D



Synopsis: The familiar world of fairy tales gets turned on its head in this fresh and fun comedy. The show centers on Rose Cinderella, a normal girl who finds herself transported to the world of Fairy Tales where she discovers that Cinderella is her grandmother. Rose enrolls at the fabled Regal Academy, where her fellow students include Hawk SnowWhite, Travis Beast, Astoria Rapunzel and Hope LeFrog – all of them heirs of the school's founding families.

Selling points: Blending comedy, music and exciting new animation techniques, *Regal Academy* was first introduced to MIP-goers a couple years ago, but things are starting to get interesting for this new concept from the creator of global smash-hit *Winx Club*. Rainbow recently inked deals with leading European home entertainment distributor Justbridge Entertainment, and with Italian publisher Fabbri Editori. "The fact that partners are signing up before the show has even broadcast shows the huge potential of this unique property," said Rainbow's VP of content, digital and publishing Cristiana Buzzelli.

Space Pop

Produced by: Genius Brands International

Format: 104 video shorts

Target audience: Girls

Type of animation: Digital

Synopsis: When the evil Empress Geela takes over the Planets of the Pentangle, its five teenage princesses disguise themselves as musicians and form a

band called Space Pop. Their mission: Spread the message of freedom and joy through music and join the Rebel Resistance Force to vanquish the conquering Empress. It won't be easy, but it will be full of adventure, music, fashion and fun.

Selling points: GBI is taking a comprehensive brand development tack with *Space Pop*, recruiting top names in music, design and storytelling to boost the animated shorts series of "cliffhanger music videos" and global L&M program. On board are Grammy-nominated music producer Ron Fair, Emmy-nominated writer Steve Banks (*SpongeBob*) and the talented artists of Han Lee Designs, guiding the character looks and style of the brand. Plans for fashion-forward licensed goods including apparel, accessories, footwear, fashion dolls, games and more are in the works.

Delivery date: Fall 2016



Winnie & Wilbur

Produced by: Winduna Enterprises Ltd.

Created by: Based on the books by Valerie Thomas and Korky Paul

Distributed by: Jetpack Distribution

Format: 52 x 11

Target audience: Kids 4-7

Type of animation: 2D

Synopsis: Winnie is a witch – wild, unpredictable and totally lovable! Wilbur the cat is her long-suffering best friend, who gets tangled up in Winnie's wonderfully wrong spells and their hair-raising consequences. Together, their amazing and hilarious misadventures bring a touch of good-natured magic into the world.

Selling points: First published in 1987, the best-selling *Winnie & Wilbur* book series is ever-expanding, currently totting up over 7 million copies sold worldwide. Using a unique 2D animation system, Scottish studio Winduna has designed the show as a richly detailed, re-watchable and authentic fan experience that also expands Winnie's universe. "We're incredibly excited about bringing these much loved characters to our preschool audience," said Channel 5 head of children's Jessica Symons. "Winnie and Wilbur are bound to surprise and delight young children and no doubt will have them in stitches of laughter, too."

Broadcasters: Commissioned by Channel 5 for MILKSHAKE!

Status: Pre-production



Word Party

Produced by: The Jim Henson Company

Created by: Alex Rockwell

Format: 26 x 11

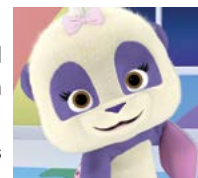
Target audience: Preschool

Type of animation: Henson Digital Puppetry

Synopsis: Young viewers will follow four adorable baby animals as they sing, dance and play their way through daily routines, learning new and exciting words along the way. There's Franny the cheetah cub, a smart natural-born leader; Bailey the sweet, sensitive elephant calf; Pip the energetic wallaby; and Lulu, the lovable baby panda and resident party animal who loves to celebrate newly learned words with a "Word Party!"

Selling points: The highly interactive series invites kids to play teacher, helping the animals while learning along with them. "Given the numerous studies showing that strong spoken language skills are the basis for literacy development, this series will provide meaningful educational content through engaging storytelling and characters, and we anticipate high demand for the series around the world," said JHC's EVP of global distribution Richard Goldsmith. And the studio's proprietary Digital Puppetry tech lends the animation a lifelike and spontaneous quality.

Delivery date: 2016, commissioned by Netflix



Zig and Zag

Produced by: JAM Media, Double Z and Flickerpix in partnership with CBBC and RTEjr

Created by: Ciaran Morrison and Mick O'Hara

Format: 26 x 11

Target audience: Kids 6-9

Type of animation: Digital 2D

Synopsis: This fish-out-of-water style teen sitcom follows Zig and Zag, two teenage alien brothers who crash land in humdrum Earthling suburbia and set up home.

Their fun-filled adventures are hatched from a desire to "make the most of" what Earth has to offer. With death defying stunts, crazy inventions and general silly sibling stuff, Zig and Zag are far from your normal neighbors.

Selling points: Zig and Zag were first introduced to viewers as puppet characters on '90s programs *The Den* (RTE Ireland) and *Big Breakfast* (Channel 4 U.K.), and are set to win over a new generation of fans with their animated reboot. Original voice stars Ciaran Morrison and Mick O'Hara serve as the spin-off's creators and writers, so older fans can rest assured it will definitely be true to the characters. Well, with a hip twist: Ricky Wilson and Simon Rix of multi-award-winning Britpop group Kaiser Chiefs created the new theme song.

Broadcasters: CBBC, RTEjr

Delivery date: Spring 2016





Creative Architecture

How Cyber Group Studios has built a foundation for success in the children's entertainment market.

Ask the ancients: the best way to build something that lasts is to start with a strong, broad foundation. Today, president Pierre Sissmann, co-founder and COO Dominique Bourse and their team at French production and distribution house Cyber Group Studios are applying the same concept to build a steady supply of solid properties for the ever-evolving kids' entertainment field.

Over the last decade, Cyber Group has found success by continuing to push its productions forward and expand its horizons when it comes to scouting talent and seeking co-production opportunities. From the breakout CG preschool hit *Zou* (156 x 11) to the reimagined swashbuckling adventures of *Zorro*



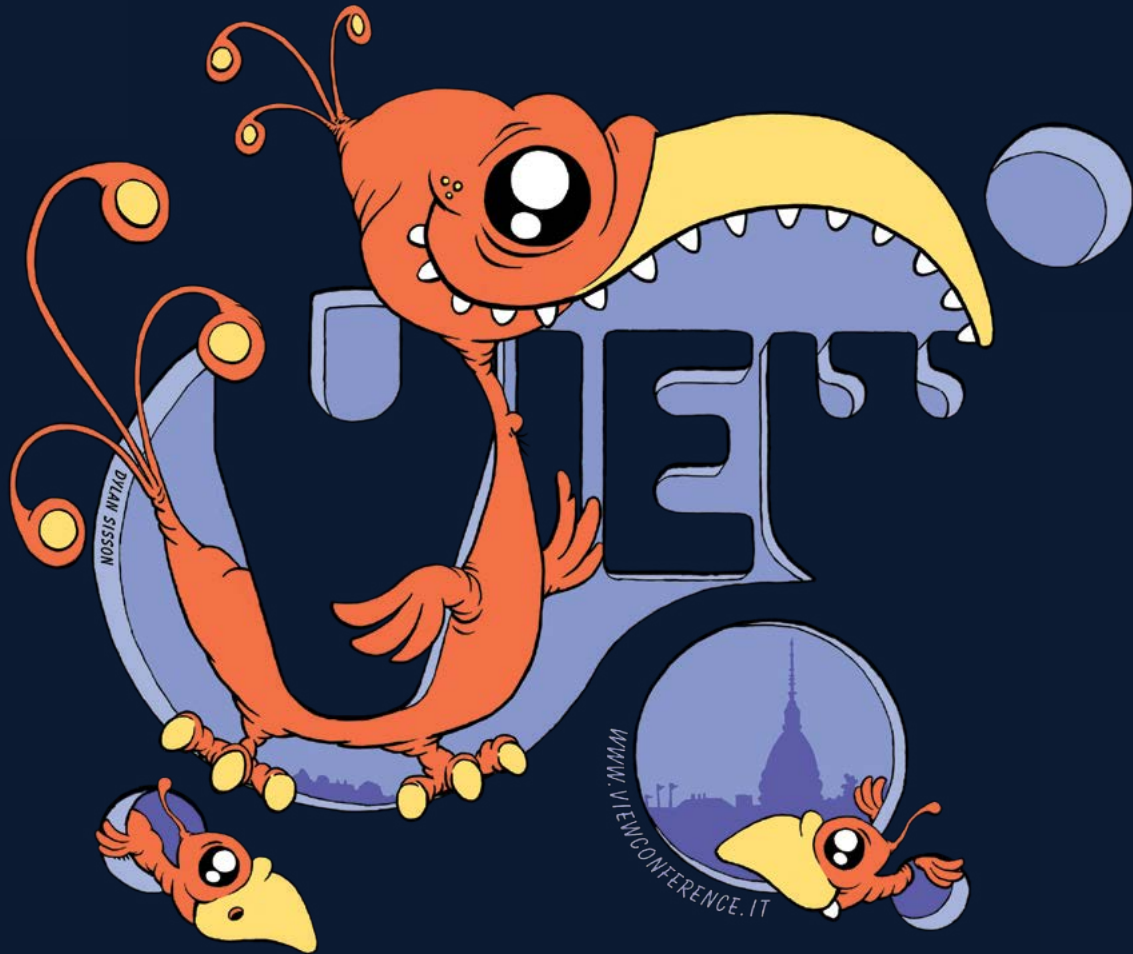
the Chronicles (26 x 22) – which will be honored as this year's MIP Junior World Premiere – it's clear the strategy works.

Currently, Sissmann says that Cyber Group has about 15 projects in development and production. The goal is for this large production slate to generate projects suited for different age groups, territories and broadcasters over the coming years while giving them the time and attention they need to be fruitful. In addition to *Zorro* and season three of *Zou*, current and upcoming productions include *Mirette Investigates* (52 x 11) for TF1, Canal Plus and WDR; an adaptation of Jonny Duddle's *The Pirates Next Door* commissioned by France Televisions; and the recently delivered TF1 Production co-pro *Mini Ninjas* (52 x 11), exec produced by Cyber Group.

continued on page 24

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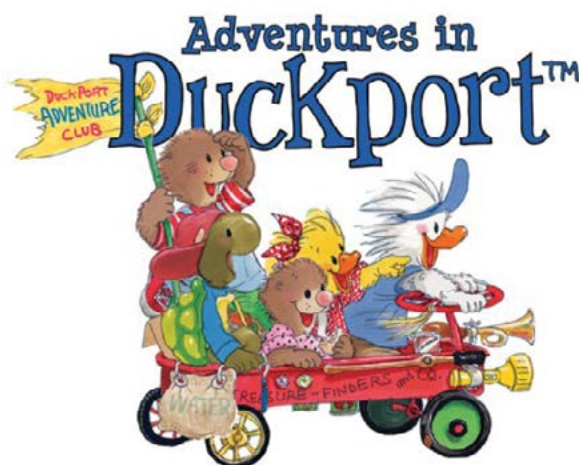
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A Mondo Aperitif

Major European animation production and distribution company Mondo TV has big plans for MIPCOM this year. While our November issue will go into detail on what the studio – now in its 51st year of operation – has in store, here is a small recap of the goings-on at Mondo TV to whet your appetite before you get the full scoop by picking up *Animation Magazine* at the MIPCOM, Brand Licensing Europe and CTN events (if you haven't subscribed yet, that is).

- Brand new to this year's Cannes confab is the series adaptation of merchandising hit Suzy's Zoo, ***Adventures in Duckport*** (52 x 11; kids 4-8). Co-produced with L.A.'s Lawless Entertainment, the series will feature original Suzy's Zoo characters, including the duck Suzy Ducken and her friends Jack Quacker, Penelope O'Quinn, Corky Turtle and others as they embark on charming adven-



tures, interacting with the world and doing their best to help the elder members of their community with love and respect. Plum Trees TV managing director Theresa Plummer-Andrews will serve as script editor for the series and play a crucial role in development. Mondo TV will handle worldwide distribution excluding North

America, while the majority of global L&M ventures and NorAm distribution falls to Lawless.

- Mondo TV Suisse SA and **Abu Dhabi Media Company** this summer reached an agreement to collaborate on the production of nine animated TV series over the next three years. The first deal of its kind for Mondo dedicates a budget of no less than \$28 million U.S. for all three 52 x 15 series, with Abu Dhabi contributing no less than 50%. The initial seasons will be produced in 2D and will be based on popular publishing properties *Majid*, *Amouna al Mazyouna* and *Kaslan Jiddan*.

Mondo TV Suisse also earlier this year executed a new co-production agreement with leading Korean toy company **Aurora World Corporation**. The deal has put Mondo in charge of further developing animated properties based on two of the company's successful lines, *Cuby Zoo* (52 x 11) and *Yoohoo & Friends* in CG (52 x 11). ▬

continued from page 22

"Next to that, we have a number of development projects we find in France or the United States, or Europe, or Asia – anything we are sort of fascinated by and we see a real market for that bring a real entertainment value," says Sissmann. "For us, the entertainment value that we are capable of offering to kids and their families is essential."

In the works are *Enchanted Sisters* and *Boubouh*, both with The Jim Henson Co., *Gilbert and Allie* with 9 Story's Brown Bag Films, *Nefertine on the Nile* with Graphilm and Cyber Group's in-house take on *Tom Sawyer*, which will take advantage of the cutting-edge animation developed for *Zorro*. At Cartoon Forum, the studio will present another Jonny Duddle project: *Gigantosaurus*, while Sissmann says that MIP attendees can expect to learn more about a new star-powered kids' musical project.

Sissmann points out that these projects can spend up to several years in development. "The idea is not to develop for the sake of developing, but to give time to the development team to create the best possible project, whether we find the market this year, next year, or the next year. We are always looking ahead to try to understand what the

public at large and different broadcasters want." Cyber Group accommodates this by completely separating its animation development and production operations.

"It's so important, because when you do this you have time to talk to talent, to give them ideas to develop ... We have spent time finding new sources of financing that will exclusively finance development and will not hinder production capacity," says Sissmann. "We try to improve each production we're doing in terms of storytelling and in terms of animation. I think that's the only thing to do because when you look at how fast the world is changing, with the tablets, the SVOD platforms, there are the same needs but also different needs. And it's become more and more competitive."

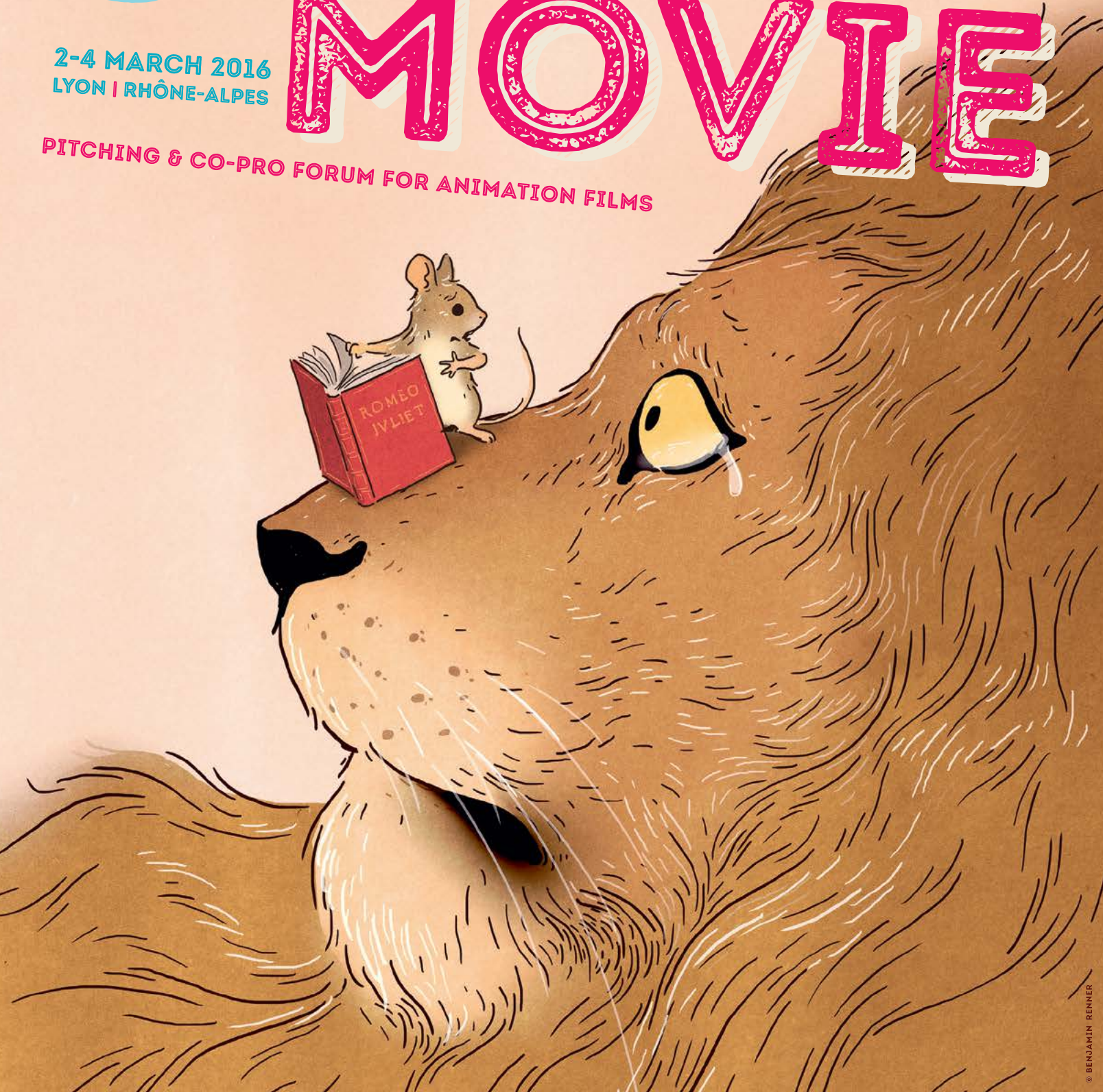
By building a broad base of development projects and giving the artists and writers time to ensure they can carry their weight, Cyber Group has crafted a strong foundation from which to take on a market full of growing competition, increased globalization and constantly evolving technology while maintaining a tradition of excellent entertainment. ▬



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OIAF 2015

Canada's capital comes alive with cutting-edge artistry at the Ottawa International Animation Festival, September 16-20.

North America's largest dedicated animation festival will once again prove one of the fall season's crowning jewels this year. The 2015 edition of this Oscar-qualifying event will present 79 films representing 23 countries, painstakingly curated from over 2,000 worthy submissions to the competition categories. In addition, the Showcase programs will offer up an additional 69 multifaceted animated gems.

"This was without doubt one of the strongest years I can recall", said Artistic Director Chris Robinson upon the big programming reveal. "The quality of almost every category was high. We could have easily added another one or two competition screenings. Animators continue to prove that animation is the summit of all arts. I'm really excited to see how audiences – and juries – react to this year's diverse group of works."

Some of the can't-miss highlights Robinson tags for visitors are recent masterpieces from established filmmakers like Theodore Ushev (*Sonambulo*), Adam Elliot (*Ernie Biscuits*), Don Hertzfeldt (*World of Tomorrow*), Ely Dagher (*Waves '98*, winner of the Cannes Palme d'Or), Sylvain Chomet (*Simpsons Couch Gag* and *Stromae: Carmen*) and Dutch creative team Job, Joris & Marieke (2014 Oscar nominee *A Single Life*).

Poster-Perfect

This year's colorful, collage-inspired poster design for OIAF comes from the inventive minds at animation collective HUT. The geographically dispersed talents of Caleb Wood, Derick Wycherly, Ted Wiggins, Africanus Okokon and Dylan Hayes came together at the festival last year for live, on-site animation production -- the fruits of which can be seen in the *Flukes and Tatters* film installation making its premiere at this year's event.



Saschka Unseld

Please, Judge Me

Ottawa once again attracts an interesting mix of industry pros to the illustrious judges' panel this year, plus a few eclectic surprises. NFB animation producer Maral Mohammadian (*The Weatherman and the Shadowboxer*), Pixar veteran Saschka Unseld (director, *The Blue Umbrella*; creative director, Passion Pictures) and festival curator Yiorgos Tsangaris (founder/artistic director, Countryside Animafest Cyprus) are joined by director, musician and writer Kaspar Jancis (*Weitzenberg Street, Marathon, Crocodile*) and local animator, director and ice sculptor Chris Dainty (co-founder, Dainty Productions).

The World Featured

In addition to five short film competitions, *plus* the Canadian Student, Short Film for Kids and Series for Kids contests, attendees can take in a quartet of unique features. Anca Damian's *The Magic Mountain* (Wed. and Sat., 7 p.m.) is a mixed-media docudrama that tells the true story of Adam Jacek Winkler, a Polish refugee who flees to Paris in the '60s and later finds himself heading to war in Afghanistan (Romania/France/Poland). Sam Orti's clay-animated *Possessed* is a darkly hilarious horror-comedy about a widowed flamenco dancer and her demonically-inclined son (Spain). Simon Rouby's first feature *Adama* uses dreamlike CG to weave the story of its 12-year-old hero who sets out from his West African village to find his older brother, traveling through war-torn Europe to the hell of the frontlines to free him (France). And from Cartoon Network U.S., the illustrative beauty of Patrick McHale's fantasy adventure *Over the Garden Wall* is presented to full effect on the big screen -- be sure to take it in before catching the behind-the-scenes talk at Professional Development Day.

The Magic Mountain



Marcel the Shell



Masterclass: Bruce Bickford



Special Screenings & Retrospectives

If It Ain't Broke: Contemporary Uses of Traditional Techniques

curated by Keltie Duncan
[Thurs. 7 p.m., Fri. 9:15 p.m.]

Everything by Everyone: The Newgrounds Revolution

curated by Sean Buckelew
[Thurs. 9:15 p.m., Fri. 7 p.m.]

Isolation Drills: The Films of Michele Cournoyer

[Fri. 3 p.m., Sat. 7 p.m.]

Motel of Fools: The Films of Kaspar Jancis

[Thurs. 11 a.m., Sat. 5 p.m.]

Bruce Bickford: Wondering Boy Poet

[Thurs. 7 p.m., Fri. 7 p.m., Sat. 9:15 p.m.]

Film Adventurer Karel Zeman

[Fri. 3 p.m., Sun. 5 p.m.]

Invention for Destruction

by Karel Zeman

[Thurs. 1 p.m., Fri. 5 p.m.]

Hotel Transylvania 2

by Genndy Tartakovsky; Sony Pictures Animation [Sun. 3 p.m.]

Talks & Classes

Indie VR: The Oculus Rift Experience

Nick Fox-Gieg (Framestore), Brett Long, Madi Pillar (TAIS), Saschka Unseld (Passion Pictures), Moderator: Ryan Stec (Artengine) [Sat. 5:30 p.m.]

Masterclass: Bruce Bickford

[Sat. 3 p.m.]

Michael Kurinsky: An Artist's Growth at Sony Pictures Animation

[Thurs 2:45 p.m.]

Toon Apprentice Day: Int'l Student Showcase,

Concordia Univ., Sheridan Coll., Algonquin Coll. [Fri., for high school groups only]

Animation Pimpcast: Leah Shore

[Thurs. 5 p.m.],

Bruce Bickford

[Sun. 11 a.m.], Kaspar Jancis

[Thurs. 7 p.m.], Michele Cournoyer [Fri. 7 p.m.]

Meet the Filmmakers: Short Film

Moderated by Chris Robinson; five sessions Thurs.-Sun. ➤

Looking to Take a Big Bite

A small fish in a big pond, Ottawa-based Victory Arts is aiming to make a splash with its *Samurai Sharks* concept.

Surfing, sharks and samurai are more than three random words from the same section of the dictionary to Tero Hollo, they are the keys to creating *Samurai Sharks*, the animated action-adventure show he's always wanted to see.

"I think I've actually been developing this property since I was a kid, and waiting for the right time to bring it to life," says Hollo, founder and director of original IP for the Ottawa-based animation company Victory Arts. "With our *Air Crafters* development at TVO Kids coming to an end, it was a blast to age up a bit and do the action show I've always been dreaming of."

Samurai Sharks is set on a distant water planet full of bio-illuminated ocean creatures and aquatic life. To this world is transported a pair of surfing-loving boys from Earth, Kai and Fin, who instantly fall in love with a planet that has nothing but waves. They connect with energy eels on the new planet, and they – along with their surfboards – transform into heroes with suits of samurai-influenced shark armor.

The series has a comedic undertone, with Fin and Kai's relationship more aptly described as "frenemies," Hollo says. Having been tied in a surfing contest when they were swept away from Earth, the pair are extremely competitive and constantly trying to outperform and outdo each other – even when performing a rescue.



Into all of this comes an epic villain, who wants to control the planet and its huge water giants and is trying to figure out which planet his young surfer opponents came from.

Before writing the pilot script or even designing the characters, Hollo designed the entire water world complete with underwater continental zones, civilizations and a working ecosystem. He also created a fully co-habitable collective of creatures and broke out how each species works with or against the others.

Hollo says he's definitely proud of the dialogue for the show. "It is fresh, unique and different," he says.

Inspired by watching his daughter and nephew smash together Transformers and

Barbie dolls in the back-yard pool, Hollo says he clearly envisions a strong toy element to the *Samurai Sharks*. "This is the creative play figure I never had and always wanted as a kid," he says.

Victory Arts is serving as the executive producer on the show, planned as 26 half-hour episodes. There is early interest from a French-language broadcaster and high-profile production companies. Hollo also is meeting with broadcasters, distributors, investors, production studios and toy and licensing agencies in search of the right partners.

"Finding the right toy company is going to be very important as we want to ensure there is a strong connection with the toy and the series together," he says. ▬

Rival surfers Kai and Fin must learn to work together when they are zapped into a lush oceanic world and become its heroes.



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Meeting of the Masters

The best and brightest are preparing to descend on Marina del Rey for the fourth annual World Animation and Visual Effects Summit, set for Nov. 2-4.

The World Animation and Visual Effects Summit is gearing up for its fourth edition, set for Nov. 2-4 at the California Yacht Club in Marina del Rey, Calif.

The intimate event offers one of the best venues for making connections with animation and visual effects professionals from all around the world over an informative, intense and rewarding three days.

The schedule includes top-level speakers and experts from every aspect of the business delivering keynote addresses, participating in panel discussions and mixing and mingling at informal gatherings.

The first day of the event will be capped with a gala party honoring the best and brightest in the animation and visual effects industries. Previous events have been among the most memorable and fun industry dos of the year, assembling a uniquely A-list collection of producers, filmmakers, voice actors, studio executives and visual effects artists. And this year promises to be no different.

New to this year is the addition of master classes on the third day of the summit. The first to be announced is a session with Jose San Roman, founder and chief creative officer of Ilion Animation Studios in Madrid, Spain. Roman's class will speak to animation being a new asset class in the financial community and to issues that most investors and studio

executives are unaware of.

The class will benefit from Roman's experience speaking to a wide global financial community and turning Ilion into a successful worldwide animation studio that has produced the 2009 feature *Planet 51*. Currently partnered with Paramount, Ilion has evolved into a multiproduction studio, aiming to produce various feature films concurrently in order to meet the growing global demand for top-quality digital content.

All of which should perfectly complement summit programming in which animators and VFX artists explain their cutting-edge techniques, tech developers show off their newest tool sets for getting the job done, and producers and executives talk about all the best ways to use animation and visual effects content in the marketplace and maximize its success.

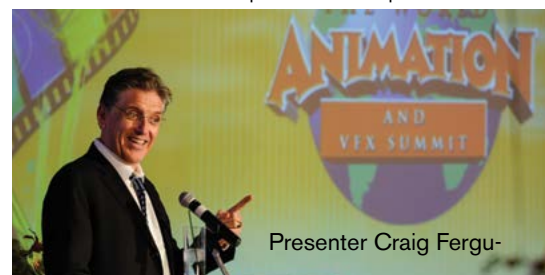
Among the confirmed speakers for this year's event:

- Michael Hirsh, chairman of The Entertainment And Media Finance Group, a Canadian financial advisory service for small to mid-size productions. Hirsh also is vice chairman of DHX Media and former CEO of Cookie Jar and Nelvana.
- Delna Bhesania, managing director and partner of Bardel Entertainment.
- Sarita Christensen, CEO, founder and owner of Copenhagen Bombay in Denmark.
- Wang Lei, chairman and senior VP of Mr. Cartoon Pictures, a subsidiary of U Young Media Group, and focuses on animation movie financing, production and operation.
- Greg Agostinelli, vice president at Epica USA.
- Katerina Pshenitsyna, international distribution manager for Moscow-based Wizart Animation.
- Andres Reyes Botello, founder and president of Boxel Animation Studio.
- Peter Gal, executive producer at DreamWorks Animation Television

○ Jeremy Zag, co-founder Zag Studios and Zagtoon.

○ Chuck Peil, VP of business development and strategic partnerships for Reel FX Animation

Companies set to participate as sponsors include: Atomic Cartoons, CelAction, DreamWorks Animation Television, Blue Sky, Natural Talent, Sony Pictures Animation, Ilion Animation Studios and Wizart Animation. More sponsors are expected to



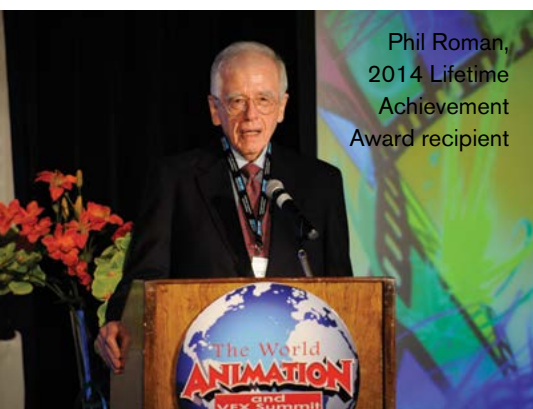
be announced shortly.

Animation projects set to be highlighted with filmmaker appearances include Blue Sky Studio's *The Peanuts Movie* and Aardman Animation's *Shaun the Sheep Movie*.

The summit is the best venue for meeting and connecting with studio executives; international managing directors, producers, directors; distributors; visual effects supervisors and artists; animators; financiers; agents; writers and talent.

These are the people who define and facilitate the movies, TV shows and new media that will grace *Animation Magazine's* covers and pages in the years to come – you can't afford to miss out.

Further information on attending the summit, including ticket info, can be found online at animation-magazine.net/summit. A limited number of tickets are available at a 10 percent discount to members of WIA, VES, ASIFA, Animation Guild, OBS and the WGA. Due to the limited capacity of the venue, this event usually sells out quickly, so buying tickets in advance is highly recommended. ☞





Bubbling Up

Deep lineup of talent and pics confirms Pixelatl's El Festival as Mexico's premier toon event.

Few animation events have grown as rapidly or become so significant so quickly as Pixelatl's El Festival in Mexico. With its fourth edition approaching Sept. 9-13 in Cuernavaca, a relaxed town known as the "city of eternal spring" south of Mexico City, the animation, comics and videogame festival last year attracted more than a thousand participants and 2,500 screening attendees.

And it's looking to build again this year, with a robust lineup of guests, events and screenings.

Keynote speakers include VFX legend Phil Tippet, *The Little Prince* director Mark Osborne, comic-book creator Noelle Stevenson, and Michiru Yamame, music composer for *Castlevania*. Indie animation icon Bill Pympton and U.K. comics writer Leah Moore will teach master classes, with workshops set with the likes of screenwriter Rob Edwards and *The Book of Life* director Jorge Gutierrez.

More than 70 professional guests overall will attend, representing major studios from 11 countries, as well as executives from the likes of Cartoon Network, Disney, Nickelodeon, Discovery Kids and Sony Pictures Animation.

But the highlight of the festival – organized by Pixelatl, an association that promotes Mexican productions both in country and abroad – is the Ideatoon Summit, a contest designed to encourage development of animated series



ideas in Mexico. Open to all Mexican studios, production companies, animators, artists, directors, scriptwriters and producers, the top 16 entries are seen by top animation executives and the winner receives a cash prize of about \$25,000 to use in producing a pilot.

Last year, the winner was *Mariachi Zombie*, which Vancouver-based Atomic Cartoons bought after seeing it at the festival. Six of the finalist studios are working for some of the channels that saw their projects.

Other awards are given for best international animated short, best Mexican animated short and the best comic-book work.

This year's lineup of animated features includes *Shaun the Sheep Movie*, *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water*, *Song of the Sea* and *The Book of Life*.

Two competitive shorts programs under the common theme "That Which Unites Us" will include international titles such as Adam Elliott's *Ernie Biscuits* and Mexican entries *Los Ases del Corral* from directors Irving Sevilla and Manuel Báez; *Fuimos Colores* by Marcos Almada and Carlos Azcuaga; *Olas al Cielo*, from Gildardo Santoyo del Castillo; and *Zimbo*, by Juan Jose Medina and Rita Basulto.

The festival offers plenty of networking opportunities, including an industry dinner and multiple parties well suited to mixing with potential contacts.

This year's festival will launch the Association of Digital Creators, which looks to build a strong animation community in Mexico and help animators to find the financial tools they need to bring their ideas to life. ▬

World Animation Celebration: 2015 Edition

WAC brings the world to the animation industry's traditional backyard Oct. 24 & 25.

To kick off the 2015 World Animation & VFX Summit, *Animation Magazine* and Animation Libation Studios have once again teamed up to present the annual World Animation Celebration. Two days of screenings, industry panels and guest speakers will be hosted by Sony Pictures Animation on its studio lot in Culver City, California at the end of this month.

This year's film selections are culled from entries which have poured in from students and professionals from over 40 countries. The final assemblage covers the gamut of animation techniques and genres, with prize categories for CG, Traditional, Stop-Motion, 2D Digital and Experimental films. WAC and the organizers aim as always to provide attendees with an illuminating look at the global



industry and emerging talents.

The festival is organized into one-hour screening blocks, running in the Ray Harryhausen Theater. These are interspersed by live panels and guest speakers in the nearby conference room. There will also be time for socializing and networking with a separately ticketed VIP Mixer on Saturday night and an awards ceremony Sun-

day night, which will reveal the winners in each category ahead of the Best in Show announcement reserved for the Summit (Nov. 2-4).

Guests confirmed for WAC at press time include **Butch Hartman** (creator, *Fairly OddParents*), **David Silverman** (director, *The Simpsons*), **James Lopez** (creator, *Hullabaloo*), **Robert Hughes** (director/producer, *Phineas and Ferb* and *Milo Murphy's Law*), **Tony Bancroft** (director, *Animal Crackers*) and **Zahara Dowlatbadi** (animation producer and co-author of *Producing Animation*). There will also be a **Judges Panel** and daily professional **Portfolio Reviews**, and director Tee Bosustow will be on hand to discuss his UPA documentary *The Boing Heard Round the World*. ≡



WAC 2014 featured panel: James Lopez, Pete Michels, Mark Aguilar, Robb Denovan and Lee Crowe.



Guest host Michael-Leon Wooley interviews guest speaker Disney Legend Floyd Norman.



Wooley and director Amy Lee Ketchum, winner of the Stop-Motion category for *Two Ghosts*



Animation Magazine president/publisher Jean Thoren speaks about the return of WAC.



Animation Libation's Michael Bonitatis, Jean Thoren, Joan Lynch, Mike Libonati and Lee Crowe.



The WAC audience takes in last year's featured panel of industry experts and festival judges.

Referrals for the Win

Exponentially increase your client list by implementing a formal referral system.

Marketing and advertising is the most expensive item for most businesses today. Getting that new client in the door the first time can require a monumental amount of time, energy and money. Once landed, the biggest mistake most service providers make is not maximizing the benefits of said client. Their most valuable commodity, contrary to popular belief, is not the fee they will pay you for the service you are providing on the short term. They possess something far more valuable: colleagues.

But how do you get to them? Here's a little secret: if you implement a formal referral system, you don't have to – they will come to you. If done properly, this could be the single most transformative experience of your business career.

The Referral ABCs

Why are referrals so powerful in the first place? There are two key things at work here. First, since you've already provided excellent service to your existing client, you now have street cred. No amount of marketing can get you this. Your client can now, in good conscience, tell his or her colleagues all about you and how great it is to work with you. That's often enough to illicit an inquiry if not go right to proposal phase for the new, referred client. Secondly, your existing client is now functioning as an influencer. Having a champion of your cause on your side carries infinitely more impact than trying to cold call or pitch a new potential client out of the blue without anyone to vouch for you.

To get started building your system, it must first have a name. This name will be seen by each and every one of your clients in email and/or printed literature. Secondly, it must spell out the terms clearly, simply, and prefera-

bly in bullet point form. No long paragraphs, fine print or confusing conditions. Make it as simple as possible, automatic and free.

To really make it stick, you need to incentivize your system. The terms need to highlight that if a client refers you to one of their colleagues, you will give their colleague a 20% first-project discount as a way of saying thank you. You should also give a commission as a reward to your client for making the referral in the first place. Use your own judgment, but 5% is a good place to start. Keep in mind, this reward is not just a one-time thing, but rather a

receive rewards automatically which they can redeem at their leisure. Asking them to participate will generate far more referrals than simply presenting the information to them and hoping they will oblige.

And here's where it really gets interesting. If one client generates three new clients for you, since you are now implementing this system to each and every client automatically, those three new clients can easily generate three each, thereby amassing nine new clients with no new marketing and advertising costs. And then those nine new clients can generate

three new referrals each, boosting the running total to 27. Those 27, if they produce three referrals each, now total 81 new clients, so on and so forth. You are essentially getting all the leverage and power of network marketing without being involved in a network marketing business.

Design, develop and implement your formal referral system now and in less than a year you could completely transform your business from a struggling mom and

pop shop to an unstoppable force with dozens, hundreds or even thousands of clients – all without spending the massive amount of time and money it would take to acquire these new clients from marketing and advertising alone.

perpetual system that rewards your client for each and every new project generated by all of their referred colleagues. This reward can be redeemed in the form of a check paid directly to them or their business, or the current running total could be used as credit which can be applied to any invoice(s) of their choice.

... And the Numbers

The key to making this work is to focus on the word "system." Your rewards program must be presented to every one of your clients on a regular basis. Ask them to participate. Tell them they are already enrolled and that they don't have to do anything except refer you to some of their trusted colleagues and they will



Martin Grebing is an award-winning animation director, producer, small business consultant and trainer. He is President of Funnybone Animation and can be reached via funnybone-animation.com.





A CG Cold War Redux

RISE recreates the not-so-distant past of a divided Germany for Guy Ritchie's stylish *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*
By Karen Idelson.

Guy Ritchie's *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* pays homage to the classic Cold War era spy films in all the ways that delight an audience – cool characters, sexy locales, stylish fashion and dynamic car chases. These are all the ingredients that have made spy films of any era an exercise in combining the slickest elements of filmmaking.

Despite being enamored with this imagery, it wasn't long before Ritchie leaned into modern tools to update all the best elements of the spy genre. After all, this film was a new take on a classic 1960s TV show, and contemporary moviemaking means the director wants more control over things like a race between two classic cars – and that he can use CG to get it just the way he wants it.

Early in the film, the three main characters – Napoleon Solo, played by Henry Cavill; Ilya Kuryakin, played by Armie Hammer; and Gaby Teller, played by Alicia Vikander – find themselves locked in a desperate chase through East Berlin. Hammer, behind the wheel of a Trabant, is pacing Cavill and Vikander as they

put the pedal to the metal in a Wartburg. Interestingly enough, these two cars are not exactly known for their speed.

"When we saw the cars – and the Trabant and the Wartburg are two of the slowest cars you can imagine – we wondered how they were going to make a chase with these two cars exciting," says Florian Gellinger, visual-effects supervisor for the German company RISE, which worked on more than 300 visual-effects shots for *U.N.C.L.E.* "But Guy Ritchie had imagined it in a really interesting way."

The Trabant and the Wartburg are storied cars of the Cold War era and associated with the style and deprivation of the East Germany that existed then. The Trabant gained notoriety worldwide when the rock band U2 incorporated it into the staging of its early 1990s Zoo TV tours.

Updating Auto Classics

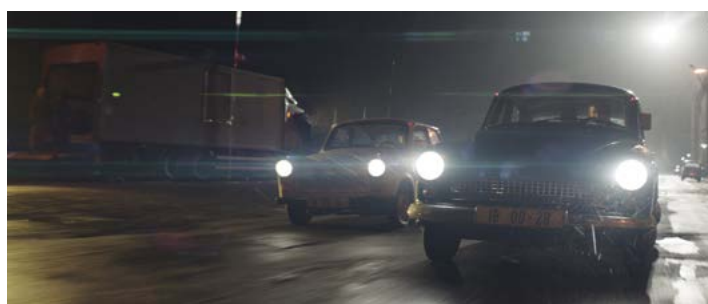
After shooting these chase sequences using practical methods – actual Trabants and Wartburgs specifically altered and trans-

formed into movie cars and cutting-edge rigs designed with camera mounts to film the cars while they were being driven at high speeds – the director decided he wanted to alter the look of what he had, and that's where RISE came into the picture. The company had been on-set since the beginning of shooting and had scanned all the elements being shot.

As the filmmakers realized how much they wanted to add and change – things like close ups of the characters during the chase, zooming in and out of the car windows as the cars sped along – it was clear they would need to replace the real cars and the real sequences that were completed with CG cars for the final sequence. And the practical footage that had already been shot was going to be especially useful.

"Once you have all the lighting information from the real cars you can use it to make what you're doing in CG look that much better," says Gellinger. "You're not just working with something that's only been in the computer."

That information made it possible for Gell-



The team at RISE visual effects studio was tasked with painstakingly re-creating both the architecture and the emotional weight of Cold War-era East Berlin, as seen in the greenscreen and final shot on the opposite page.

Finesse was also required to blend modern cinema expectations with a historical aesthetic when it came to a car chase using clunky vehicles of the period (above).

inger and his team to add details like a certain realistic reflectiveness on the hood of the Trabant or the Wartburg as they passed underneath a light or became dirty during the course of the chase.

At the end of the long, perilous chase through East Berlin, the Wartburg becomes wedged between two buildings and the filmmakers went with full CG for that shot because the practical complications made it difficult to stage and complete with the look and humor the director wanted at the finish of the sequence.

Recreating East Germany

Gellinger and his team also invested a lot of their time in the East German backdrops to make them as true to the actual construction standards of the era as well as the feeling of the time and place where the story exists. The research became more involved than they anticipated because much of the construction from the Cold War era was torn down or redone after the Berlin Wall came down and

Germany was reunified.

Ultimately, they did extensive scanning of areas in Poland, which had buildings that were largely as they were during the Cold War. But there was still significantly more work to be done to get the look right.

"It wasn't just doing all the scanning we did, which was very important to the look of everything," says Gellinger. "We had to learn about all the construction standards in East Berlin for that time, that you had to place a certain number of windows in a certain place and that the floors had to be a certain thickness and on the streets there were certain types of plants and trees that had to exist there."

Gellinger and his team also were careful to create the kind of distressed look that fell over so many buildings in East Germany during this time. Everything had to look run down and left behind in order to set the scene for a generation of moviegoers that might not be all that familiar with the period. They were looking to create a texture that was believable.

No self-respecting Cold War spy thriller

would be complete without a shot of the Berlin Wall or Checkpoint Charlie and *U.N.C.L.E.* doesn't leave out these significant shots. In a genuinely symbolic moment, the American agent Solo is able to take the German spy recruit Teller over the Berlin Wall and into West Berlin to safety, just barely escaping the pursuit of a KGB agent.

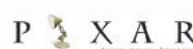
And what do they use to escape certain peril? A zip line. Well, a zip line and some great CG.

"The zip-line sequence where they escape over the Berlin Wall was done entirely with CG," says Gellinger. "It was another situation where they wanted a very specific look and thought the way to get it and get exactly what they want was CG."

Karen Idelson is a Torrance-based freelance writer. Her mother escaped from East Berlin to the free West just after World War II. Sadly, Napoleon Solo wasn't there with a zip line to help her cross over.

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Tech Reviews

Chaos Group V-Ray 3.2

When I asked the guys at Chaos, "How many new features have been implemented in V-Ray 3.2?" their answer was, "Hundreds." So, I said, "For the review, let's boil that down to something maybe ... less than that." And here's what we came up with.

At SIGGRAPH 2015, the Big Thing was Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality and Virtual Augmented Reality. Unsurprisingly, one of V-Ray's highest profile new features is camera support for VR rendering, more specifically targeted (at the moment) to the Oculus Rift and Samsung Gear. Basically, you can render stereo 360-degree views in either a cube-map or spherical format, which simply and seamlessly fit into the new technology. I remain unconvinced that the technology will take off as a "film" experience, but I have been convinced of its importance in tons of other fields – education, medical, industrial, mechanical, real estate – and Chaos seems to have taken the hint.

More advances are filed under "RealTime", which is rendering on the GPUs. Depending on your specific video card, your results may vary. But, using the Progressive render to get quick feedback for lighting and shading, V-Ray RT was throwing its calculations to the video card rather than the CPU. Now 3.2 has added QMC Sampling (the stuff that deals with noise), displacement, composite maps, texture baking, UDIM support, et al. I think they just plan to keep throwing stuff at

the GPU to speed things up until all of our display cards explode. But, it means faster feedback, which means we go home earlier in the day – or that the director feels he can tweak things a few more times.

For me, the next big, important feature is Volume Grids – the containers that hold all the FX-y stuff like smoke and fire and explosions. In the not-too-distant past, you may have seen smoke rendered in Houdini's Mantra, water in RenderMan, robots in Arnold and environments in V-Ray. That smoke is a nightmare if your robot, and water and buildings happen to be *inside* the smoke, which is very likely.

See, the smoke had to be rendered with a holdout matte of the other stuff. Depending on how the renderers deals with motion blur, antialiasing, etc., those mattes would *never* fit properly. (Just ask John Knoll about *Pacific Rim*.) But now, V-Ray's Volume Grid can import lots of standard fluid formats – OpenVDB, Field3D and Chaos' own PhoenixFD – so you can render your smoke, with holdouts, in V-Ray. And you benefit from all the other stuff you get from rendering objects in volume, like GI bounce, shadows, all sorts of neat bonuses.

These are the standout features. I'm not even including code optimization and everything that makes the whole thing run faster. Definitely a worthwhile upgrade, especially if you are in the VR space or are doing lighting for effects work.

chaosgroup.com

Allegorithmic Bitmap2Material

It's a common theme in my reviews that sometimes the most innocuous tools save the most time. We get so caught up in our Mayas, Maxs and Houdinis that when something flies in under the radar, we catch the blip and then say, "Huh, of course this is a great idea!"

This is the case for Allegorithmic's Bitmap2Material application. The guys at Allegorithmic have been getting the most buzz from their Designer and Painter tools – the only way they could have been adopted faster is if someone told Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt about them. Everyone seems to be jumping on the bandwagon as physically based shaders are becoming more ubiquitous. But this isn't about those products. It's about their little cousin.

Bitmap2Material is a simple, ingenious bit of software that takes a photograph, performs voodoo, and extracts from that photo the maps you need to drive the PBR shaders. Normals, height, metallic (i.e. reflectivity), diffuse, ambient occlusion, etc. are all made available for shader development. Caveat: Depending on the quality of the photo.

On top of that, you can tile your texture in a multitude of different ways to avoid the telltale patterns that evolve from tiled images. And, you can add in additional grime and dirt, which contribute to the organic structure and breakup of the tiling.

If you are familiar with Painter and Designer, then you'll have no trouble getting around B2M. The same 3D display with HDR IBL (although I can't seem to change the HDR image ... I'll have to check in about that) and the 2D maps displays are in them all. You get real-time feedback for the material as you make adjustments to the sliders. And all the nomenclature between the software is consistent.

All this is in the less expensive Indie license. The Pro license brings the magic directly into the Maya, Max, Modo, Unity, Unreal, etc. shader trees. So instead of bringing the images into the standalone B2M and exporting the maps to be brought back into your favorite 3D package, you bring the image into the 3D software, apply it to the B2M node, and you get dynamically generated map extractions inside your shader. *Pretty handy.*

And remember, the whole **S u b - s t a n c e**



by Todd Sheridan Perry

suite is available not as a subscription, but more as a rent-to-own plan: You actually own the software at the end of the year. If you want to upgrade, you go through the whole cycle again. But, it gives artists access to the tools without a large upfront cash payment.

allegorithmic.com

Ricoh Theta & HDR 360 Bracket Pro

Obtaining HDR images can be a real pain. For production, you generally need a special mount like a Nodal Ninja with a remote control to bracket the exposure on your DSLR, which needs a lens with a near 180-degree field of view. Then you take those images and stitch them together and flatten the exposures to a single HDR in your preferred software flavor... It's nuts.

So, Ricoh came out with the Theta HDR camera. It's about the size of an Apple TV remote and has two small wide-angle lenses facing opposite one another. You press the button and get an automatic 360-degree selfie (if that's what you like to do). Or you can download the app to your smartphone and control the camera through its built in wireless, and then transfer the photos to your phone for easy social media-ing.

However, you can take things one step further and download (at least for iOS devices) HDR 360 Bracket Pro. At \$59, it's a comparatively hefty price for a phone app, but you're a professional, right? What Instagrammer is taking bracketed selfies?

With HDR 360, you can auto bracket up to nine exposures (I'm not going to say stops because the math is probably not one to one), and control the ISO of the camera from the app. The front and back are automatically stitched into the full 360 view and they are ready to be moved to either your phone wirelessly or your computer through the USB. Next, you take those images and smash 'em together in Photoshop or Nuke or HDR Studio or what-have-you, and you have a quick and dirty HDR for your game or VFX lighting needs.

I don't think it's going to be used on the next Marvel feature ... The limitations of the hardware prevent the broader exposure range of a DSLR and it's limited to JPGs – so that 8-bits just wouldn't cut it for high-end production work. But, at \$300 (or \$359 with HDR 360), you are getting most of the way there for a fraction of the cost, and a fraction of the setup time. A perfect stocking stuffer for that special Lighting TD in your life.

us.ricoh-imaging.com | itunes.com



Full Genre Mash-Up

Full Metal Panic blends familiar tropes with new twists and wildly shifts moods over three engaging seasons.
Review by Charles Solomon.

Full Metal Panic!: The Complete Series

(FUNimation: \$54.98, 3 discs, Blu-ray)

Full Metal Panic? Fumoffu: The Complete Series

(FUNimation: \$44.98, 2 discs, Blu-ray)

Full Metal Panic!: The Second Raid

(FUNimation: \$34.98, 2 discs, Blu-ray)

Writer Shouji Gatou and director Koichi Chigira somehow blend the disparate elements of *mecha* battles, magical girls, slapstick comedy and a teenage romcom in the entertaining series *Full Metal Panic!* (2002). Although the winning comedy-adventure scored a hit in both Japan and America, it zigzags wildly in tone and content. The first and third seasons are more dramatic and violent, while the second “Fumoffu” segment is just plain silly.

High school student and class representative Kaname Chidori may be a “Whispered,” an individual who possesses formidable psychic powers. The KGB and even more sinister organizations want to exploit those powers, so the anti-terrorist mercenary corps Mithril dispatches a mismatched trio of officers to protect her: Melissa Mao, Sousuke Sagara and Kurz Weber.

Sousuke tries to blend in at Jindai High, but his efforts to pass as just another kid make a fish out of water look calm. Raised by Mithril in war-torn Helmajistan, Sousuke has been trained in guerilla combat since he was eight. He's a skilled, deadly fighter when he needs to be. But his military bearing, hair-trigger reflexes and terminal literal-mindedness invariably land him in trouble with Kaname.

Assertive, independent and capable of initiating action, Kaname represents a new breed of magical girl. She doesn't whine like Hitomi in *Escaflowne* or bumble like Serena in *Sailor Moon*. A scream seems to be her normal tone of voice, and she's quite capable of giving Sou-

suke a hit upside the head when he commits his umpteenth faux pas.

Season one builds to a deadly confrontation when the Helmajistani terrorist Gauron commandeers the Mithril submarine *Tuatha de Danaan*. The telepathic bond between Commander Teletha “Tess” Testarossa and Kaname enables them to recapture control of the powerful vessel. Sousuke leads the counterattack, which builds to a mano-a-mano duel with Gauron. In the climactic *mecha* knife fight, Sousuke also draws on Kaname's psi powers. Chigira juxtaposes that duel with impressive CG scenes of the *Danaan* breaching like a humpback whale.



From Hamster to Hero

For the second season, *Fumoffu* (2003), the filmmakers dropped the *mecha* and magical girl elements to focus on the mismatched romance between Kaname and Sousuke, with hilarious results. Sousuke infiltrates a local amusement park by disguising himself in a plush walk-around suit of their mascot Bonta-kun, who looks like a giant hamster. His hard-hitting martial arts attacks make a wonderfully absurd foil for the character's super-cuteness: Imagine Pikachu playing Rambo. When nearsighted karate champion Issei quarrels with Sousuke, they accidentally punch out the janitor during their fight. Ordered by the school president to assist their victim while he

recovers, they nearly destroy the school in a bout of competitive nurturing.

The darker third season, *Full Metal Panic! Second Raid* (2005), picks up about two months after the first adventure and ignores the farcical comedy of *Fumoffu*. Gauron, the murderous terrorist Sousuke battled aboard the *Danaan*, reappears in China. Director Yasuhiro Takemoto sets a major *mecha* battle in a tunnel beneath the Yangtze River to create a sequence that is simul-

taneously dynamic and claustrophobic. As the threat from Gauron grows more dire, the Mithril commanders order Sousuke to pilot the super-*mecha* Arbalest; the sinister-sounding Wraith will take over protecting Kaname.

For the first time in his life, Sousuke has to make a choice: obey orders, as he always has; or follow the first genuine emotions he's experienced. Kaname uses every trick she knows – including a few she learned from Sousuke – to outwit Wraith and expose the assassin who's stalking her. Sousuke confronts the sadistic Gauron and his own twisted past as a child soldier in a largely deserted Hong Kong. After Kaname knocks some sense into his head (literally and figuratively), Sousuke emerges as the hero the crisis demands. He rides to the rescue in a nick of time, piloting a *mecha* that levels everything in its path.

As the voice of Sousuke, Chris Patton shifts from despair to righteous fury to hilarious confusion; as Kaname, Luci Christian matches him mood swing for mood swing. They rank as the most fractious anime couple since Ranma Saotome met Akane Tendo in *Ranma ½* – and the most fun. ☞

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Steel yourself for cooling weather, premature holiday decorations and the return of after-school traffic with Disney shorts, Peanuts specials, *Looney Tunes: Rabbits Run*, *Over the Garden Wall* and more. By Mercedes Milligan.

Walt Disney Animation Studios Short Films Collection

[Disney, \$39.99 BD]

The House of Mouse is offering a delightful smorgasbord of shorts this month with this new high-def collection. The two-disc set contains an assortment of Oscar winners and fan favorites from the last 15 years, as well as brand new extras including an inside look at Disney shorts production, plus filmmaker intros and interviews. The @ DisneyAnimation: A Short Story on Shorts behind-the-scenes featurette is hosted by

actor T.J. Miller (*Big Hero 6*'s Fred) and includes a roundtable with the brilliant creatives behind the shorts on this release.

The films – and filmmakers appearing in their intros – are: 2015's *Frozen Fever* (Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee, Peter Del Veche, Aimee Scribner), 2014's Oscar-winning *Feast* (Patrick Osborne, Kristina Reed), 2013's Oscar-nominated *Get a Horse!* (Dorothy McKim, Eric Goldberg, Adam Green), 2012's Oscar-winning *Paperman* (Reed, John Kahrs), 2012's *Tangled Ever After* (Nathan Greno, Scribner,

Mark Kennedy), *The Ballad of Nessie* (Kevin Deters, Stevie Wermers-Skelton, McKim), 2010's *Tick Tock Tale* (Dean Wellins), 2010's *Prep & Landing: Operation Secret Santa* (Deters, Wermers-Skelton, McKim), 2007's *How to Hook Up Your Home Theater* (Deters, Wermers-Skelton, Ian Gooding), 2006's Oscar-nominated *The Little Matchgirl* (Dave Bossert, Tom MacDougall), 2004's Oscar-nominated *Lorenzo* (Mike Gabriel) and 2000's *John Henry* (Mark Henn).

[Release date: Aug. 18]



Peanuts Emmy Honored Collection

[Warner, \$26.99]

Adjust your bowtie and settle into your front-row seat to a showcase of the most prestigious *Peanuts* specials. Offering family-friendly laughs, charming stories of friendship and important life lessons as animated by Lee

Mendelson and Bill Melendez, the two-disc set contains 11 Emmy winners and nominees remastered in brilliant Ultra HD transfers.

The collection includes *You're the Greatest, Charlie Brown*; *She's a Good Skate, Charlie Brown*; *It's Magic, Charlie Brown*; *Someday You'll Find Her, Charlie Brown*; *Is this Goodbye, Char-*

lie Brown?; Emmy-winner *Life Is a Circus, Charlie Brown*; *What Have We Learned, Charlie Brown?* (new to DVD); *It's Flashbeagle, Charlie Brown*; *Snoopy's Getting Married, Charlie Brown*; *Why, Charlie Brown, Why?* (new to DVD); and Emmy-winner *You're a Good Sport, Charlie Brown*.

[Release date: Sept. 15]



Looney Tunes: Rabbits Run

[Warner, \$19.98]

In this spankin' new original movie, the chaos begins with a rare flower that can turn anything invisible. When Lola Bunny receives it as a gift, she naively adds it to her latest perfume recipe. Convinced she has the next big scent, she hops a ride to Paris with crazy cab-

bies Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck – while Foghorn Leghorn, Elmer Fudd, Yosemite Sam and Marvin the Martian are in pursuit, with designs on the perfume-slash-invisibility spray.

Produced and directed by Jeff Siergey (*Mike Tyson Mysteries*, *The Looney Tunes Show*), the movie features the voices of Fred Armisen, Jeff Bergman,

Maurice LaMarche, Rachel Ramras and Jim Rash. Ramras also wrote the screenplay with Hugh Davidson and developed the story with Davidson and Larry Dorf. The disc also comes with bonus cartoons *Best Friends*, *Coyote Falls*, *Fur of Flying*, *Rabid Rider* and *I Tawt I Taw a Puddy Tat*.

[Release date: Aug. 4]



Over the Garden Wall

[Warner, \$14.97]

Cartoon Network's first-ever animated miniseries arrives on disc at last, nearly a year after its five-day broadcasting run last year. Created by *Adventure Time* vet Patrick McHale and based on his pilot/short *Tome of the Unknown*, the fantastical tale centers on brothers Wirt and Greg who

find themselves lost in a strange forest. With the help of a talking bluebird named Beatrice and an assortment of bizarre characters, the duo try to find their way home while evading a mysterious menace known as the Beast.

In addition to the 10-episode adventure – which features the voices of Elijah Wood, Melanie Lynskey, Chris Isaak, Christopher Lloyd, John Cleese

and others – the DVD comes with an assortment of special features. Delve further into Greg and Wirt's journey through the Unknown with Behind Over the Garden Wall, deleted animatics, commentaries, composer's cut, alternate title cards and, of course, McHale's award-winning *Tome of the Unknown*.

[Release date: Sept. 8]



Honorable Mentions:

Clarence: Dust Buddies

Sept. 15 [Warner, \$14.97]

Pixies

Aug. 4 [Vertical, \$20.99]

The Seventh Dwarf

Aug. 18 [Shout! Factory, \$16.97 DVD | \$24.97 BD]

Star Wars Rebels: Complete Season One

Sept. 1 [Disney, \$39.99 DVD | \$45.99 BD]

Two by Two: God's Little Creatures

Aug. 25 [eOne, \$16.98]



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